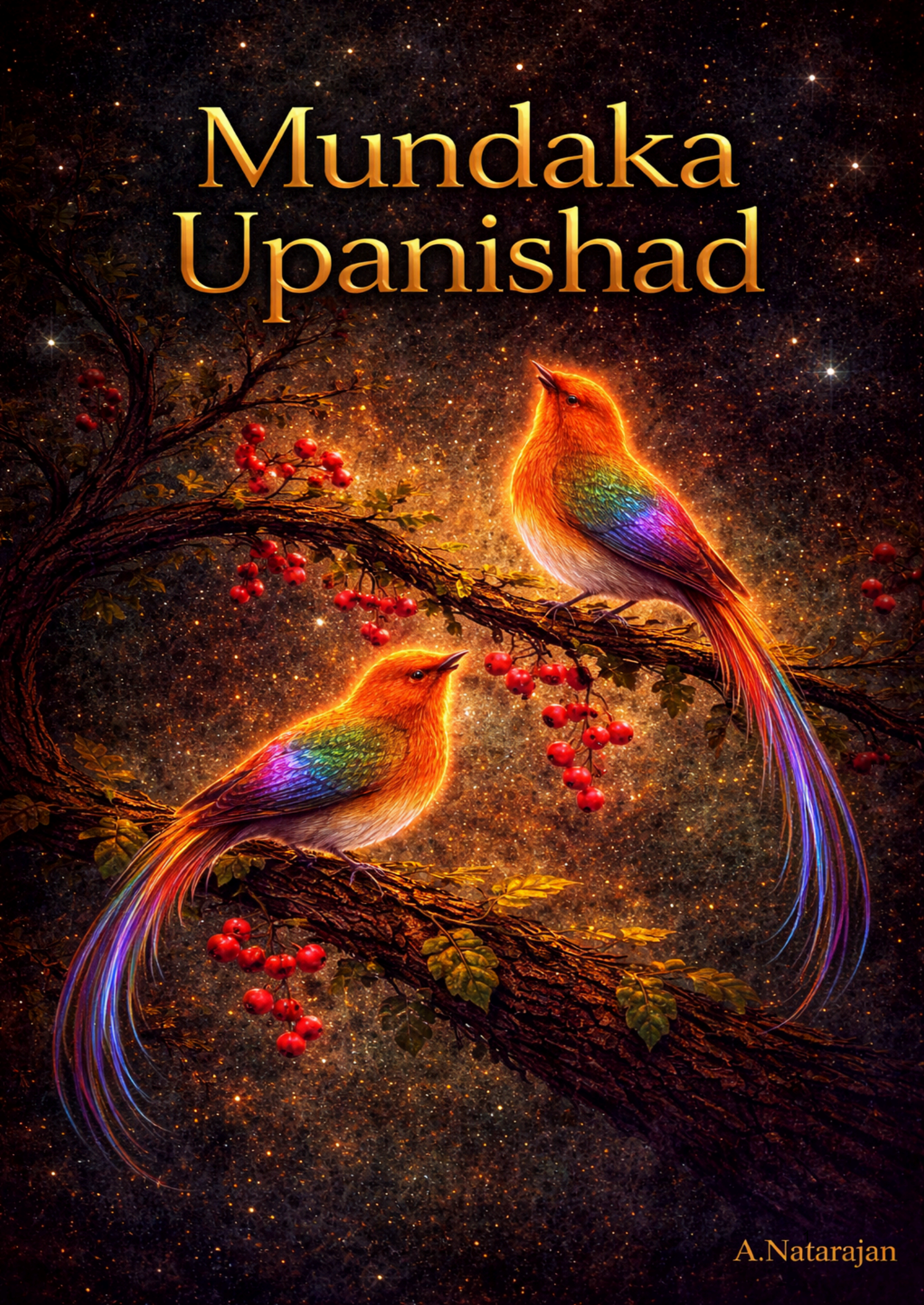
Mundaka Upanishad



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Introduction

The Vedas are the oldest scriptures of Hinduism. Composed in Sanskrit, they represent some of the earliest works of Sanskrit literature. There are four Vedas:

- **The Rigveda**
- **The Yajurveda**
- **The Samaveda**
- **The Atharvaveda**

Each of the four Vedas is divided into four subdivisions:

- **The Samhitas** — collections of mantras and hymns
- **The Brahmanas** — texts that provide instructions for performing Vedic rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices
- **The Aranyakas** — works that explain rituals, ceremonies, and sacrifices, often from a contemplative perspective
- **The Upanishads** — philosophical texts that discuss the Absolute Truth and impart spiritual knowledge

The last part of the Vedas are known as **Jnana Kanda** or **Vedanta**. Another term used to describe the concluding part of the Vedas is **Upanishad**. Each of the four Vedas contains several Upanishads.

Although the word *Upanishad* can be interpreted in several ways, it primarily refers to knowledge that leads to the realization of **Brahman**—the Absolute Consciousness. The Upanishads are scriptures that guide an individual toward **Brahma Vidya**, the knowledge of the Absolute Truth.

The word *Upanishad* is derived from three Sanskrit roots: *upa*, *ni*, and *shad*.

- **Upa** means “near.” In this context, it signifies approaching the *guru*. Thus, *Upanishad* implies knowledge gained by sitting near a teacher.
- **Ni** denotes *nishchaya jnana*, or unwavering knowledge—knowledge attained without doubt.
- **Shad** is the fruit attained through knowledge. *Shad* means “destruction.” Here, it refers to the destruction of *samsara*, the cycle of birth and death.

Therefore, *Upanishad* signifies the process of approaching a guru to attain doubtless knowledge that destroys the cycle of birth and rebirth. The Brahma Vidya gained through this

process is called the Upanishad. Hence, while the texts themselves are referred to as Upanishads, in essence, it is the knowledge realized through them that truly constitutes the Upanishad.

Mundaka Upanishad

The **Mundaka Upanishad** belongs to the **Atharva Veda**. The word *Mundaka* is derived from *mund*, which means “to shave the head.” It refers to ascetics with shaven heads who have renounced worldly possessions in their pursuit of the Highest Knowledge.

All Upanishads begin with a prayer known as the **Shanti Mantra**. Each Veda has its own distinctive Shanti Mantra, and by studying the Shanti Mantra of an Upanishad, one can identify the Veda to which it belongs.

The Shanti Mantra is a short prayer seeking protection from obstacles that may arise in the path of learning the Upanishads and in one’s spiritual growth. For any endeavour to be successful, both self-effort and God’s grace are equally essential. The Shanti Mantra represents a prayer for divine grace in addition to personal effort. It may be addressed to the guru, to **Para Brahman**, or to **Ishvara** (manifested Brahman). In the Mundaka Upanishad, the Shanti Mantra is directed toward Ishvara.

According to the scriptures, Ishvara has manifested as the entire universe; therefore, the world and Ishvara are not different. Ishvara expresses Himself through various powers. Based on these expressions, He is given different names. Each manifestation of power is referred to as a **Devata**. When expressed as fire, He is called **Agni Devata**; as rain, **Varuna Devata**; and as air, **Vayu Devata**. Not only the external world, but even our bodies and minds are expressions of the same divine power (*shakti*). The powers behind seeing, speaking, and thinking are also manifestations of Ishvara. Hence, the Shanti Mantra is addressed to the Devatas.

What is a Shanti Mantra?

Students who study the Upanishads seek only knowledge; they do not desire material gains. Material benefits are obtained through sacrifices and rituals described in the **Karma Kanda** section of the Vedas. However, those who approach the **Jnana Kanda** have a single aim—to attain knowledge. Such students have reached this stage only after renouncing material pursuits. Without a transformation of one’s goal, one cannot turn toward the Upanishads and will remain engaged in worldly endeavours.

For some individuals, it may take a long time even to become aware of such a spiritual pursuit. When this realization dawns, they may regret not having begun earlier and feel the need for more time to attain the goal. Consequently, they pray for a longer life, recognizing the preciousness of human birth and its potential for liberation.

Others wish to attain knowledge within their present lifetime and therefore pray that their life lasts at least until their **prarabdha karma** is available. They ask that their life not be cut short by external factors, as they now seek liberation rather than worldly achievements. This is a **nishkamya prayer**—a prayer free from material desires and directed solely toward spiritual progress.

The next prayer is for health. Even a long life is of little value without good health. Health includes both physical and mental well-being. While the body must be capable of supporting study and discipline, the mind must also be strong, focused, and unwavering in its pursuit of liberation (*mumukshutva*). The mind should be pure and well-prepared to receive knowledge.

Physical health depends on proper nourishment, while mental health depends on the impressions received through the five sense organs. When the senses are exposed to uplifting and wholesome influences, the mind remains healthy; otherwise, it weakens and deteriorates. Therefore, cultivating a healthy mind through disciplined sensory input is essential.

In the Shanti Mantra of the Mundaka Upanishad, the Devatas—who preside over both the gross and subtle bodies—are invoked to seek three blessings:

1. **Long life** — a life that lasts at least until the exhaustion of prarabdha karma and is not prematurely ended by accidents before liberation is attained.

2. **A healthy physical body** — to enable one to sit near the guru and pursue learning.

3. **A healthy mental body** — to maintain firm resolve and comprehend the teachings.

The word *shanti* means peace. The threefold repetition of *shanti* in the mantra is a prayer for freedom from three types of obstacles:

- **Adhidaivika** — obstacles arising from natural forces beyond human control, such as natural disasters.

- **Adhibhautika** — obstacles arising from the external world or other beings, including responsibilities and social obligations.

- **Adhyatmika** — obstacles arising from within oneself, such as illness, mental disturbances, or lack of determination.

The Shanti Mantra of the Mundaka Upanishad

Om bhadram karṇebhiḥ śṛṇuyāma devāḥ |
Bhadram paśyemākṣabhir yajatrāḥ |
Sthirair aṅgais tuṣṭuvāṃsastanūbhiḥ |
Vyaśema devahitaṃ yadāyuḥ |
Svasti na indro vṛddhaśravāḥ |

Svasti naḥ pūṣā viśvavedāḥ |
Svasti nastārkṣyo ariṣṭanemiḥ |
Svasti no bṛhaspatir dadhātu |
Om śāntiḥ śāntiḥ śāntiḥ ॥

The Meaning

Om! O gods, may we hear auspicious words with our ears.
May we see auspicious things with our eyes while engaged in sacred acts.
With steady limbs and healthy bodies, may we praise You
And live the life allotted to us for the sake of divine purpose.

May Indra, the renowned leader of the Devas, grant us prosperity.
May Pūṣā, the all-knowing nourisher, be gracious to us.
May Tārkṣya (Garuda), the destroyer of obstacles, protect us.
May Bṛhaspati, the guru of the Devas, bestow welfare upon us.

Om! Peace! Peace! Peace!

The Structure of the Mundaka Upanishad

The **Mundaka Upanishad** consists of **three chapters**, each divided into **two sections**, making a total of **six sections**. The chapters are referred to as **Mundakas**, and the sections/ parts are known as **Khandas**. Altogether, the Upanishad contains **65 mantras**.

Mundaka 1

Kandaka 1

Chapter 1 – Part 1

The Upanishads, like many other Hindu philosophical scriptures, are often presented in the form of a dialogue between a guru and a student. This method is employed for several important reasons:

1. It emphasizes that the knowledge of the Upanishads must be learned directly from a guru. Without proper guidance, the teachings may be misunderstood or even interpreted incorrectly.

2. It demonstrates that this knowledge has been transmitted through an unbroken lineage (parampara), establishing its divine origin and systematic transmission from

teacher to student.

3. It affirms the authenticity and flawlessness of the knowledge showing we cannot negate or contradict it.

4. It makes the teachings easier to grasp, as knowledge conveyed through questions and answers is often clearer and more engaging than abstract statements.

Importance of Stories in the Scriptures

Most Hindu scriptures employ stories as an effective teaching tool for several reasons:

1. Supreme Knowledge (Brahma Vidya) can be communicated more easily through stories, as narratives naturally engage the human mind.

2. Stories describing the life of a yogi and the contentment attained through knowledge inspire others to pursue the same path.

3. Through stories, the qualities of an ideal student are illustrated. For example, in the *Katha Upanishad*, the character of Nachiketa exemplifies the virtues required of a sincere seeker.

4. Stories also describe the qualities of the guru, setting an example for both teachers and students.

5. They demonstrate the proper attitude with which a student should approach the guru.

6. The historical accuracy of a story is less important than the spiritual truth it conveys.

In a similar manner, the **Mundaka Upanishad** begins with a narrative explaining how Supreme Knowledge was transmitted through a divine lineage.

Verse 1

The four-faced Brahma, the creator of the universe and the preserver of cosmic order, manifested before all beings. He imparted to his first son, Atharvan, the knowledge of Brahman, which is the foundation of all knowledge. 1.1.1

Brahma the first Born

When **Brahman**, along with its power of **Maya**, first manifested as **Isvara**, that initial expression came to be known as **Brahma**. Brahma is thus the first deity to manifest, even

before the other gods. Being the first-born (*adi-karta*), Brahma went on to create the universe. The Mundaka Upanishad declares that all knowledge originates from this first-born, who is the knower of all beings, as he is their creator.

Brahma taught the Supreme Knowledge, known as **Brahma Vidya**. It is called Supreme Knowledge for two reasons:

1. It originates from **Brahman** itself.

2. It grants the highest form of knowledge—the direct knowledge of **Brahman**.

From this account, we understand:

- Lord Brahma transmitted the Supreme Knowledge through the lineage.

- The nature of **Brahman** is revealed.

- The nature of the knowledge itself is shown to be superior to all other forms of knowledge, as it stands as the witness to all knowledge.

All other forms of knowledge serve merely as preparatory disciplines for attaining Supreme Knowledge. Knowledge of Brahman is considered superior because it alone leads to the highest **purusartha**—**moksha**, or liberation. No other knowledge can bestow this ultimate human goal.

Verse 2

That knowledge of Brahman which Brahma taught Atharva, Atharva taught Angira in olden times; and he taught it to Satyavaha son of Bharadvaja; and Satyavaha taught Angiras the knowledge so descended from the greater to the less. 1.1.2

Guru shishya parampara

This verse explains the teacher–student lineage, showing how knowledge is passed down in a systematic and disciplined way. Supreme knowledge is not learned casually. It is carefully transmitted from highly qualified teachers to deserving students. Students receive this knowledge only through their guru.

From this account, we understand the following points:

Brahma: By describing Brahma as the first-born, all-powerful, and all-knowing, the text shows that the knowledge comes from a superior source. This also establishes that the knowledge itself is superior.

Witness to all other knowledge: All other forms of knowledge deal with temporary objects. When those objects change or are destroyed, that knowledge loses its value. Since everything in the world is subject to change, all worldly knowledge is impermanent. Only the knowledge of **Brahman** is permanent. This knowledge alone can give lasting peace and contentment.

Lineage: The knowledge comes through an unbroken lineage, known as **parampara**. It is described as beginningless, meaning it did not suddenly arise in someone's mind. Because of this, students must approach the Upanishads with faith. Even when the teachings seem to contradict one's existing beliefs, they must be accepted and understood as truth through proper guidance.

After explaining the greatness of the knowledge, the qualities of the guru and the student, and establishing that the knowledge has come from Brahma through a lineage, the Upanishad emphasizes that one must have faith in the knowledge.

Verse 3

Saunaka, a great performer of sacrifices, approached Angiras with reverence and asked, "Venerable sir, what is that by knowing which everything becomes known?" 1.1.3

The Upanishad unfolds as an answer to the student, Saunaka.

Saunaka is described as someone who possesses a large **yajna shala**, a place for performing fire sacrifices. This shows that he regularly performed **yajnas**. From this, we understand the qualities of the student. Saunaka comes from a background that is well versed in the **Vedas** and has lived a life of **karma yoga**. Having purified his mind through **karma yoga**, he approaches Angiras with humility to seek a higher truth.

What kind of guru did Saunaka approach?

Saunaka approached a guru who belonged to a **guru shishya parampara**, a lineage in which knowledge is systematically passed down from teacher to student. Although the text does not describe the exact manner in which Saunaka approached his guru, it clearly states that he approached him in a traditionally appropriate way. The most important quality required of a student is humility. One must set aside ego and sit before the guru with the readiness to listen and learn.

Saunaka's question—about knowing one thing by which everything becomes known—may sound strange to us. From our everyday experience, we know that there is no single piece of knowledge by which all other knowledge is gained. However, knowledge related to cause and effect is an exception.

In Sanskrit, **karana** means the **reason**, and **karya** means the **effect** (that which is produced).

Anything that is responsible for producing something else is called the **karana**. That which is produced or manifested is called the **karya**. For example, pots are made from clay. Clay is the karana (reason), and the pot is the karya (effect).

There is no essential difference between clay and pot except in form. To distinguish that form, we give it a name. So we can say:

reason + form = effect
pot = clay + form

When something is an effect, there can be many of them. Many pots can be made from the same clay. Therefore, the karana is one, while the karya is many. The effect depends on the reason, but the reason does not depend on the effect. If the pots are broken, the clay still remains. Clay exists independently, while the pot exists only because of clay.

Anything that is independent is called **Sat**, meaning Truth. That which is dependent is a delusion. For example, the body exists independently, but its shadow does not.

If we know the **karana**, we automatically know all the **karyas** that arise from it. By knowing clay, we know all pots. The specific details of the pot, such as its size or shape, are not essential because form itself is not fundamental. Once the root reason is known, nothing more remains to be known.

Coming back to Saunaka's question: is there something by knowing which everything becomes known?

In ordinary situations, there is no such principle. But in the case of cause and effect, knowing the cause means knowing the effect. Similarly, if all creation arises from **Ishvara**, then by knowing **Ishvara**, everything is known.

Through this question, we understand that Saunaka is asking his guru to explain **Brahman**, the Absolute Consciousness. Knowing Brahman means knowing everything that has arisen from it, all manifestations of the universe.

From the nature of the question itself, it is clear that Saunaka already understands the existence of one Absolute Consciousness as the root cause of all creation.

The **Mundaka Upanishad** is the response of Saunaka's guru to this profound question.

Verse 4:

To him he said "The knowers of Brahman declare that there are two kinds of knowledge to be acquired, namely, Para and Apara, i.e., the higher and the lower. 1.1.4

As a reply to Saunaka, his guru explains that those who know the truth say there are two types of knowledge:

1. **Para Vidya**
2. **Apara Vidya**

Para Vidya is **Atma Vidya** or **Brahman Vidya**. **Apara Vidya** is **anatma vidya**, knowledge of everything other than the Self. **Para Vidya** is also called **karana vidya** or **karana jnana**, meaning knowledge of the reason. **Apara Vidya** is called **karya vidya** or **karya jnana**, meaning knowledge of the effect.

Difference between reason and effect

The **karana** (reason) is not subject to destruction, whereas the **karya** (effect) is subject to destruction. The reason is permanent, while the effect is impermanent.

The guru emphasizes that both kinds of knowledge must be known.

Why should Apara Vidya be acquired?

A natural question arises: if liberation is attained only through **Para Vidya**, what is the purpose of **Apara Vidya**? Why does the guru insist on knowing both?

Although liberation is attained only through para vidya, apara vidya plays an important supporting role in gaining that knowledge. Through understanding effects, one is gradually led to inquire into the reason behind them.

Apara Vidya can be compared to a cooking vessel used to prepare rice. The vessel itself is not the goal, but it is necessary in order to cook the rice. In the same way, apara vidya is not the final goal, but it is necessary to reach para vidya.

Apara Vidya teaches righteous living, rituals, and spiritual disciplines. These practices purify the mind. A purified mind leads to detachment, which then leads to the desire for liberation.

Therefore, apara vidya should not be seen as useless knowledge. In this context, it simply means knowledge that is different from the supreme knowledge, namely **Atma Vidya** or **Brahman Vidya**. It includes all forms of knowledge other than the knowledge of the Self.

With the help of apara vidya, a person who lives a righteous life becomes qualified to receive para vidya.

Another purpose of acquiring apara vidya is to eventually renounce the world. By fully understanding its limitations, one naturally develops dispassion toward worldly pursuits and turns toward the ultimate truth.

After explaining this, the guru proceeds to describe apara vidya in detail.

The guru explains that all the four Vedas come under apara vidya. To understand this clearly, we can look at it in two ways.

First, in general usage, when we say **Vedas**, we usually refer to the **Karma Kanda**, the portion dealing with rituals and actions. The concluding portion of the Vedas, known as the **Jnana Kanda**, is usually referred to as **Vedanta** or **Upanishads**.

Second, even if we consider the entire Vedas including the **Upanishads**, we must understand that mere verbal knowledge of the Vedas is still apara vidya. This verbal knowledge is called shabda jnana, which means learning and memorizing the words of the mantras. This is considered apara vidya.

The knowledge of the Vedas was traditionally passed down in two stages:

1. **Shabda grahana** — first memorizing the words of the mantras. This is **Apara Vidya**.
2. **Artha grahana** — understanding the meaning of the mantras. This understanding leads to liberation and is therefore **Para Vidya**.

To understand the Vedas, there are six auxiliary disciplines known as the **Veda Angani**. These also belong to **Apara Vidya**. They are:

1. **Shiksha** — the science of correct pronunciation.
2. **Kalpa** — texts that prescribe which mantras are to be used for different rituals and yajnas.
3. **Vyakarana** — the study of Sanskrit grammar.
4. **Nirukta** — the study of the roots and origins of words.
5. **Chandas** — the study of Vedic meters.
6. **Jyotisha** — Vedic astrology, which helps determine the most appropriate time to perform rituals for best results.

Knowledge of any of these disciplines does not directly lead to liberation. Everything that we acquire or learn in this world falls under apara vidya.

Verse 5:

Of these, the Apara Vidhya is the Rig Veda, the Yajur Veda, the Sama Veda, and the Atharva Veda, the siksha, the code of rituals, grammar, nirukta, chhandas and astrology. Then the Para Vidhya is that by which the immortal is known.1.1.5

Para vidya is the knowledge by which **Brahman** is known. The Upanishads use the word **akshara** for Brahman, meaning that which does not get destroyed. After defining Brahman with this single word, the guru goes on to explain its characteristics.

Adrishya — Brahman cannot be seen. It has no form, like air or space. Brahman cannot be grasped by any of the sense organs. It is not an object of the senses. Brahman cannot be held, touched, or felt. From this, we understand that whatever we know through the senses belongs to apara vidya.

Agotra — Brahman has no lineage. There is no **parampara** for Brahman. It is neither born nor created. It has always existed.

Avarna — Brahman has no attributes. It is **Nirguna**, meaning without qualities. Brahman has no eyes, ears, hands, or legs. It is not an object to be experienced, nor is it an instrument through which experience happens.

Nitya — Brahman is eternal. It is not limited by time and exists in the past, present, and future.

Where is Brahman? Brahman is omnipresent. It exists everywhere and is not limited by space. Even though Brahman exists everywhere and at all times, it cannot be experienced because it is extremely subtle.

Objects become easy to know when they have many attributes. When attributes are reduced, objects become subtler and harder to perceive. Earth has five attributes and can be known through all five sense organs. Water has four attributes, fire has three, air has two, and space has only one attribute, sound. Brahman has no attributes at all. Being **Nirguna**, it is subtler than even space and therefore cannot be known through the senses.

Avyaya — Brahman is changeless and indestructible. Objects with attributes undergo change and decay as their attributes diminish. For example, when color fades, the cloth deteriorates. Since Brahman has no attributes, there is no change or destruction in Brahman.

Bhuta Yoni — everything that is born originates from Brahman. Brahman is the reason for the existence of the universe. Just as clay is the material reason for pots, Brahman is the material reason for the world. The potter is the intelligent cause, but clay is the material cause. By knowing clay, we know all pots. Similarly, by knowing Brahman, we know everything that has arisen from it.

Brahman is one, but it appears as many through manifestation.

The guru further explains that although many forms appear, great yogis see everything as one. They see Brahman everywhere and in everything.

One who has the right understanding knows that there is no duality. There is only one reality, expressed as “I am.”

When we understand Brahman as the reason for the world and for all manifestations, we understand everything that exists.

Verse 6:

That which cannot be perceived, cannot be seized, has no origin, has no properties, has neither ear nor eye, has neither hands nor feet, which is eternal, diversely manifested, all-pervading, extremely subtle, and undecaying, which the wise perceive as the source of all beings. 1.1.6

Brahman is the Cause

Brahman is the **karana** (reason), and from It the entire world arises. The relationship between **Brahman** and the world is a **karana–karya sambandha**, meaning a reason–effect relationship, similar to the relationship between clay and pots.

Material cause

The **material cause** is that which is responsible for the creation, sustenance, and destruction of an effect. Only when clay exists can pots exist. We cannot remove clay from a pot and still retain the pot. When a pot breaks, it resolves back into clay.

That which exists before the effect is created, during its existence, and after its destruction is called the **material cause**.

The scriptures state that **Ishvara** (manifested **Brahman**, God) is the material cause of the world. This raises a natural question:

Where did Ishvara obtain the material to create the world?

According to the scriptures, there is nothing beyond or apart from **Brahman**. Therefore, **Brahman** itself is the material cause of creation. At the same time, **Brahman** is also the **intellectual cause**, the conscious principle that knows and directs creation.

Thus, in the case of creation, Brahman is both the material cause and the intellectual cause.

When is material and intellectual causes the same

In ordinary experience, the material cause and the intellectual cause are different. For example, clay is the material cause of a pot, while the potter is the intellectual cause. However, the scriptures give examples where both causes are the same.

Spider
A spider produces a web using material drawn from its own body. The spider is both the material cause and the intellectual cause of the web.

Earth
From the earth arise plants and trees. Earth provides the material and also supports their growth. In this sense, earth functions as both the material and the intellectual cause.

Human being
Hair grows from a human being. The human is the source, and the hair arises from that source. Hair, which is **jada** (non-conscious), comes from a conscious being.

From these examples, we understand several important principles.

From the spider example, we learn that a single source can be both the material and intellectual cause.

From the earth and plant example, we learn two additional principles:
1. The source is one, while the effects are many. From one earth many trees and plants arise.
2. Whatever arises from a source shares the same basic nature as the source.

Why do different forms arise?

If all creation comes from one source, we may wonder why different forms exist, such as humans, animals, and plants. This difference is explained using two kinds of causes:

1. **Samanya karana**
2. **Vishesha karana**

Samanya karana is the general cause common to all. For example, earth is the **samanya karana** for all plants.

Vishesha karana is the specific cause that produces variation. The individual seed determines whether a plant becomes a mango tree or a neem tree.

Similarly, **akshara** (imperishable **Brahman**) is the **samanya karana** for all beings. The specific form a being takes is determined by its own **karma**, which functions as the **vishesha karana**.

All beings are born into a particular plane of existence and with a particular body based on their own **karma**. The individual's **vishesha karana** determines how and where one is born.

Difference in characteristics between cause and effect

From the human and hair example, we may raise a doubt. The cause is conscious, while the effect is non-conscious. How can a non-conscious object arise from a conscious source?

To explain this, the scriptures describe two types of creation:

1. **Salakshana srishti:** This means creation where the cause and the effect share the same characteristics.
2. **Vilakshana srishti:** This means creation where the cause and the effect differ in characteristics.

In some forms of creation, the effect reflects the nature of the cause directly. In others, the effect appears different, even though it arises from the same source.

Through these explanations, the Upanishad shows that although the world appears diverse and varied, it arises from a single, non-dual source, **Brahman**, which alone is the ultimate **karana** of everything.

Verse 7:

As the spider sends forth and draws in (its web), as herbs grow from the earth, as hairs grow from the living person, so this universe arises from the imperishable. 1.1.7

How did Ishvara (God, manifested consciousness) create the world?

Did everything come out suddenly all at once, or did creation happen step by step?

The teaching explains that from a single **karana** (reason or source), many **karya** (effects) emerge. From one source, many names and forms arise.

Take the example of gold. Many ornaments can be made from gold. From this we understand the principle:

Source + Names and Forms = Effects.

Each ornament has a distinct form and name, but those forms and names already exist in the gold in an unmanifest condition. They are not newly produced; they are only brought out into manifestation. Similarly, all forms and names already exist in the source and become visible only when they manifest.

From this we understand two fundamental principles:

1. One is the source or reason.
2. The other is **namarupa**, names and forms.

We cannot see names and forms in the source before creation because they are not manifest. They exist in an unmanifest state within the source. This unmanifest state is called **avyakta**, which means not manifest or without form. Thus, **namarupa** exists as **avyakta** in **akshara**, the imperishable **Brahman**. When manifestation occurs, these names and forms become visible and can be experienced through our senses.

Another example is that of a seed. The roots, trunk, branches, leaves, flowers, fruits, and the entire tree exist in an unmanifest form within the seed. If the seed did not already contain the power to manifest these, the tree could never arise. Therefore, not only the source, but also the unmanifest names and forms within it together constitute the cause.

Now we come to the creation of the world.

Since the world has come out of the source, what was its condition before manifestation?

Before creation, **Brahman**, the absolute consciousness, alone existed, along with two associated principles.

1. **Nama** (name)
2. **Rupa** (form)

called **avyakta namarupa**, which is also referred to as **maya**.

Maya refers to names and forms that have not yet manifested. For creation to occur, these unmanifest names and forms must become manifest.

Namarupa is also called **prakriti**. **Prakriti** is dependent on **Brahman**, just as ornaments are dependent on gold for their existence. Ornaments cannot exist independently of gold.

Therefore, **akshara Brahman** along with **maya** initiates manifestation.

Creation does not happen randomly, suddenly, or without an order. It unfolds in a definite sequence. The **Upanishad** explains that **Brahman** first wills or desires to manifest. When this happens, unmanifest **maya** becomes ready to manifest, and creation begins.

1. First, the subtle creation takes place. The subtle primordial elements, the subtle **panchabhutas**, manifest first. From these arise the subtle worlds. From the subtle worlds, subtle bodies are formed, meaning the subtle bodies of all beings come into existence.
2. After this, the gross **panchabhutas**, the experiential elements, are created. From them arises the gross world. From the gross world emerge the fourteen worlds.

Once the world is fully manifested, gross physical bodies are created.

When beings obtain gross bodies and a world to live in, they begin to perform **karma**. Actions produce results called **karma phala**. To experience these results, beings require bodies. Through bodies, actions are performed again, producing further results, leading to more embodiment. In this way, the cycle of creation continues.

Regarding maya, it generally remains unmanifest. Maya**,** however has two states:

1. The unmanifest maya, which remains passive along with **Brahman**.
2. The other is maya in a ready-to-manifest condition.

Even though maya has these two states, it does not act independently. During dissolution, all manifestation resolves completely. After dissolution, only Brahman remains, without any creation.

Thus, although maya appears to have two states, passive and ready to manifest, action does not truly belong to maya. Brahman alone remains changeless throughout creation, sustenance, and dissolution.

Verse 8:

Brahman expands by means of austerity and from It comes the primal matter. From matter comes the Prana and from it the mind. From the mind the elements arise giving way to the worlds. From the world the actions and from actions their fruits. 1.1.8

Akshara Brahman

The first qualification for anything to be a **nimitta karana** (intelligent cause) is knowledge of what it creates. A creator must fully know the creation. This is the basic qualification of any creator.

For example, if we make cloth from cotton, we must already have knowledge of the cloth. Without that knowledge, creation is not possible.

If **Brahman**, as **Ishvara**, creates everything, then It must know everything that is created. Therefore, **Ishvara** is **Sarvajna**, the knower of all. Being all-knowing is the first qualification required for a creator.

How does knowledge arise?

Knowledge arises from thoughts. Without thoughts, knowledge cannot exist. The modification or transformation of thought is what becomes knowledge.

When we perceive an object, the mind undergoes a change corresponding to that object. We see through the eyes, and the mind takes the form of the object as a thought. That transformation gives rise to knowledge. If there is no thought, there is no knowledge.

In deep sleep, there are no new thoughts, and therefore no new knowledge. For knowledge to arise, a mind is required, and that mind must undergo transformation.

So, for Brahman to have transformation of thought, does Brahman have a mind? Where is the mind of Brahman?

The **shastras** explain that **maya** is the mind of **Akshara Brahman**.

When we speak of **upadana karana** (material cause), **Brahman** along with **maya** is the **upadana karana**.

When we speak of **nimitta karana** (intelligent cause), the same **Brahman** along with **maya** is the **nimitta karana**.

Brahman along with **namarupa** creates everything. The unmanifest **namarupa** is called **maya**. Thus, **Akshara Brahman** with maya is both the **upadana karana** and the **nimitta karana**.

Since maya functions as the mind of **Brahman**, **Ishvara** gains knowledge of the world through maya.

Here, **Ishvara**, the knower of all, is described using two terms.

1. **Sarvajna**, the knower of the cause, which is **para vidya** or **karana jnana**.
2. **Sarvavit**, the knower of all effects, which is **apara vidya** or **karya jnana**.

Consider a potter who makes pots. The potter has knowledge of the clay, which is the source, and also knowledge of the individual pots, which are the effects. Possessing knowledge of both the reason and the effects is the defining quality of a **nimitta karana**. The creator holds both **para vidya** and **apara vidya**.

How does the creator create?

The **Upanishad** says that creation happens through **sankalpa** (intentions/ resolutions), through **tapas** or inner resolve. Creation arises through the **tapas** of **Akshara Brahman**.

Normally, we cannot create real objects merely through thought. However, when the creation does not have independent reality, it can be created through thought.

In dreams, we create entire universes, we create people, environments, and experiences. Our thoughts become both the **upadana karana** and **nimitta karana** of the dream world.

Through thoughts alone, we create ourselves, others, and complete worlds in dreams, and we transact within them. This creation exists only through sankalpa (intentions/ resolutions).

When we wake up, we realize that the dream world had no independent reality. Similarly, this waking world is like a dream of Ishvara. We exist within the dream of **Ishvara**.

For **Ishvara**, who is **Sarvajna** and **Sarvavit**, creation is merely a **sankalpa**.

From that sankalpa, the subtle universe, the **sukshma prapancha**, **Hiranyagarbha**, **namarupa**, and food, meaning everything that can be experienced, comes into manifestation.

From the **nimitta karana**, **Brahman**, both the experiencer and the experienced objects arise.

Verse 9:

For him who is the all-knowing and all-wise, whose austerity consists of knowledge — from Him — the Imperishable Brahman, is born Brahma, name, form and food. 1.1.9

Mundaka 1

Kandaka 2

Chapter 1 – Part 2

The second part begins with apara vidya. Any knowledge other than the knowledge of **Brahman** is called apara vidya. In this section, two specific forms of apara vidya are explained in detail:

1. **Karma**
2. **Upasana**

These two are discussed because they are the direct means that prepare a seeker for **para vidya**. They are the conscious efforts a person can make in the journey toward liberation.

Karma refers to all actions performed through the body and speech. **Upasana** refers to actions performed by the mind.

Although **karma** generally means all actions, here it specifically refers to **vaidika karma**, the actions prescribed in the **Vedas**, mainly **yajnas**. These actions are performed according to precise rules to attain specific results such as health, wealth, rain, or heavenly enjoyment.

This section first explains what one gains by performing **karma**. The **Vedas** prescribe many **yajnas**, and explaining these forms the main subject of the **karma kanda**.

After that, the **Upanishad** explains what one cannot gain through **karma**.

Karma

Why should one perform karma?

The **Upanishad** explains the benefits of performing prescribed duties. In short, the following results are attained through **karma**

1. Prosperity and well being in this world.
2. Attainment of heaven after death through sacrifices and charity.
3. When duties are performed without desire for these results, one gains purity of mind and becomes qualified for **para vidya.**

Just as it is important to understand what **karma** can give, it is equally important to understand what it cannot give.

1. Actions never produce permanent results. This is the primary limitation of **karma**. All results gained through actions are temporary.
2. Even when actions are performed as **karma yoga**, they do not directly give knowledge or liberation.

Upasana

Upasana is also a form of **karma**, but it takes place at the level of the mind.

Benefits of **karma** and **upasana:**

1. Through actions, a person fulfills desires and gains wealth, thereby attaining **artha** and **kama**. Like **karma**, **upasana** also contributes to well being in this world. However, **upasana** is more subtle and more difficult to perform than physical actions.

2. The scriptures state that **upasana** can also lead a person to **Brahma loka**.

3. When actions, including mental actions, are performed without desire for a specific outcome, the performer gains mental purity. Such a person develops **sama** and **dama**, inner calm and control of the senses.

4. With a purified and calm mind, when one practices meditation, one becomes qualified to pursue **para vidya**.

Verse 1:

This is the Truth: The rituals which were revealed to the sages in the hymns have been described in many ways in the three Vedas. Perform them, for this is your path to the world of good deeds. 1.2.1

From this verse above, we derive four main points:

1. The **karma kanda** section of the **Vedas** prescribes many actions and sacrifices to be performed. These prescribed actions have been handed down by saints through tradition. When they are performed correctly and according to the rules, they are certain to produce results. One should not doubt their validity or effectiveness.

2. For those who desire the fruits of their actions, performing the prescribed **vaidika karmas** is the appropriate path. The **Upanishad** makes it clear that actions are meant for people who seek results from actions.

3. Although the verse explicitly mentions three **Vedas**, we must understand that the **Atharva Veda** is also included. The **Rig Veda** consists of **rig mantras**, the **Yajur Veda** consists of **yajur mantras**, and when these mantras are set to music, they are called the **Sama Veda**. The **rig** and **yajur mantras** are said to have come from the sage **Atharva**, and therefore they are also referred to as **Atharvana Veda**. Hence, even though only three are mentioned, all four **Vedas** are implied.

4. The **Upanishad** addresses human beings as **satya kama**. Here, **satya** refers to the fruits of action, not truth. Satya kama therefore means those who desire the results of actions. Such people are instructed to perform the prescribed duties.

The **Upanishad** also emphasizes that these actions should be performed regularly. The reason is that regular performance of karma yields comfort, prosperity, and desirable results.

Those who do not desire the fruits of actions are not required to perform the prescribed **vaidika karmas**. However, for those who have desires, regularly performing these actions is the only path.

Verse 2:

When the sacred fire is well lit and flame is burning high, offer your oblations with faith in the space between the two portions, where the ghee should be poured. 1.2.2

Here, the **Upanishads** take one karma as an example to explain an important principle. In the **karma kanda**, there are many different actions prescribed. If a person performs **karma** with an expectation of results, then that **karma** must be performed properly and according to the rules. There should be no flaw in its performance.

The **Upanishad** warns the seekers that if prescribed actions are not done correctly, they will not yield the desired results and may instead produce negative consequences.

Types of Karma

There are several kinds of **karma** described in the scriptures:

Nitya karma: These are actions that must be performed daily without fail, based on one's **varna** and **ashrama**.

Naimittika karma: These are actions that must be performed on special occasions such as marriage, birth, or death.

Kamya karma: These are actions performed to attain a specific desired result.

Prayaschitta karma: These are actions performed to compensate for wrongdoing and to neutralize the effects of sin.

Nishiddha karma: These are actions that are strictly prohibited and should never be performed.

In this **Upanishad**, the guru takes one **nitya karma** as an example and explains that those who desire **karma phala** must perform it correctly. If they do not, they will incur **pratyavaya dosha**, which means sin arising from improper or incomplete performance of obligatory duties.

However, if a person performs the same **nitya karma** without any desire for results, and only for purification of the mind, then even if there are minor imperfections, they do not incur **pratyavaya dosha**.

If one performs **nitya karma** with desire, the scriptures say that the result attained is comfort and well-being. If a person lives according to **dharma**, performs duties properly, and even without reflecting deeply on the knowledge of the **Vedas**, then upon leaving the body, such a person attains comfort in the higher worlds.

Example of Agnihotram

The **Upanishad** takes **Agnihotram** as an example of **nitya karma**.

Agnihotram is a ritual performed twice daily, in the morning and evening, usually lasting five to ten minutes. In this ritual, two offerings (**ahuti**) are made while invoking specific demigods (**devatas)**.

In the morning, the **devatas** invoked are the **Sun** and **Prajapati**. The offerings (**dravya**) used are milk and curd.

In the evening, the **devatas** invoked are **Agni** and **Prajapati**.

The offerings are placed into the fire. **Agni** acts as the carrier and delivers the offering to the respective demigods (**devatas)**. When the fire burns steadily between the north and south directions, the **ahuti** is offered. The **Upanishad** does not explain **Agnihotram** in detail but uses it only as an illustration.

The text also states that **Agnihotram** must be performed along with other **yajnas**. If one performs only Agnihotram and neglects other obligatory rituals, one does not gain the full benefits of karma.

Without performing rituals such as **Purnamasa**, **Chaturmasya**, **Agrayana**, without feeding guests, and without performing rituals at the proper time, the **Upanishad** warns that a person will not reach heaven for seven births and will also lose the merit required to attain higher worlds.

Verse 3:

He whose agnihotra is without Darsa, without Paurnamasa, without Chaturmasya, without agrayana, without guests and without oblation is without vaisvadeva ceremony, or irregularly performed, destroys his worlds till the seventh. 1.2.3

Just as fire has many names, the tip of the fire is also described with many names in the scriptures. The tip of the fire is compared to our tongue.

When we place food on our tongue, we swallow it and it disappears from our sight. In the same way, when an offering is placed into the fire, it is taken in and disappears. Because of this similarity, the fire is said to have a tongue.

In Vedic rituals, the fire is not seen merely as an element. It is a divine medium that receives the offerings and delivers them to the devatas. Just as the tongue receives food for the body, the tongue of fire receives the offerings meant for the devatas.

Verse 4:

Kali, karali, also manojava, sulothia, sudhumravarna, sphulingini, and visvaruchi are the seven moving tongues of fire. 1.2.4

Benefits of Karma

The **Upanishad** states that the primary benefit of **karma** is heaven. One who performs yajna properly, when the fire is well kindled, at the right time, and following the correct procedure, attains heaven (**svarga)**.

That which is offered as **ahuti** into the **fire** becomes the means to reach heaven. The **ahuti** itself is said to create the path that leads the performer to **svarga**. In this way, the offering becomes the connecting link between the human effort and the heavenly result.

The **Upanishad** further says that the **ahuti** carries the performer to the abode of Indra, who is described as the leader of the **devas**. Thus, through properly performed karma, one attains celestial worlds and enjoys the results of one's actions.

Characteristics of Ahuti

The **ahuti** is described as taking the form of the rays of the sun. Symbolically, the ahuti becomes united with the sun and travels along with it. In this way, the sun's rays act as the vehicle that carries the performer to svargaloka.

The **ahuti**, having become the rays of the sun, leads the performer with affectionate words and praise. When the person reaches **svargaloka**, they are welcomed and told, "This is your world, earned by your **punya**."

In **svargaloka**, there is no sorrow like that found in the earthly world. The experiences there are pleasurable, refined, and free from the gross suffering that characterizes earthly life. The person receives respect, comfort, and good treatment as a result of their meritorious actions.

They call this realm as **Brahmaloka**, even though it is actually **svargaloka**. This is done to glorify the result of karma**.** This description highlights the highest possible result of karma**.**

Verse 5:

A man who performs the sacrifices when these flames are shining and offers oblations at the right time, is carried by these oblations on the rays of the sun to the world where the lord of gods abides. 1.2.5

Four Important Points About Karma

1. **Karma** gives only a limited result. Every karma produces only a definite and limited **phala**. It cannot give an unlimited or permanent result. No action, however great, can grant infinite fulfillment or liberation.

2. **Karma** arises from ignorance and desire. Karma is born out of **avidya**, the ignorance of one's true nature. Because of ignorance, desire arises, and because of desire, action is performed. To perform any karma, there must be a desire in the mind and effort through the body, speech, or mind. Karma creates further karma, because to fulfill one desire, more actions are required. Desire itself arises due to the lack of knowledge of the Self. Thus, karma is both the product of ignorance and the cause of continued ignorance.

3. **Karma** is **asaram**, not permanent. Karma does not have lasting existence. Although it produces results, those results are short-lived. Once the fruit received through the action is exhausted, it disappears. Therefore, karma can never give permanent fulfillment or peace.

4. **Karma** is the seed of sorrow and **samsara.** Every karma produces a result, either **punya** or **papa**. To experience these results, one must take a body and be born in a particular realm. Thus, karma creates repeated birth and death and keeps one bound in samsara. By performing different karma, one acquires different bodies and different worlds, and the cycle of samsara continues endlessly.

Karma does not yield Permanent Results

For any action (**karma**) to take place, there must be a **karta** (doer) and a **karana** (instrument). In a **yajna**, various materials are required, and these are called **karaka**. For any object or action to come into existence, **karaka** is necessary.

The **karaka** itself is impermanent. When that which produces **karma** is impermanent, the **karma** produced by it must also be impermanent. Naturally, the **phala** (result) that arises from such **karma** is also impermanent.

From this, three important conclusions are drawn:

1. That which creates **karma**, namely the **karaka**, is impermanent.

2. Since the **karaka** is impermanent, the **karma** produced is also impermanent. **Karma** is compared to a weak boat. When the instruments themselves are weak and impermanent, the results they produce are also weak and impermanent.

3. Those who believe that **karma** alone will lead to liberation will inevitably fall back into **samsara**.

The verse explains that everything involved in completing a **yajna**, such as the **yajamana**, **purohita**, **devata**, and the **yajna** itself, together forming eighteen components, are impermanent.

Any form of worship or **yajna** is impermanent. Just as one cannot cross a vast ocean using a small boat, one cannot cross **samsara** through karma alone. Those who attempt this journey may go some distance, but eventually fall back.

Such people may attain higher worlds, but they are still subject to old age, death, and sorrow. They remain trapped in the cycle of birth, aging, death, and suffering.

Verse 6:

These oblations shining bright carry the sacrificer through the rays of the sun worshipping him and greeting him with pleasant words. This is the well-laid path of virtue leading to heaven. 1.2.6

Verse 7:

But frail are those rafts of sacrifices, conducted by eighteen people, upon whom rests the inferior work. Therefore they are destructible. The fools who rejoice in them as the Highest Good fall victims again and again to old age and death. 1.2.7

The Two Essential Steps for a Seeker

A person must cross two important steps to move toward liberation:

1. One must understand that the root cause of **samsara** and sorrow is ignorance (**avidya**). When a person recognizes their own ignorance, they develop the correct attitude to become a student.

2. To remove ignorance, one must study the **shastras** and approach a **guru**. This **sadhana** is essential.

The **Upanishad** points out that one often does not even realize that they are trapped in **samsara**.

The Four Types of People

The scriptures generally describe four kinds of people:

1. Those who do not know, and do not know that they do not know.
2. Those who do not know, but know that they do not know. These people are qualified students.
3. Those who know, but do not know that they know. Some may have studied the **shastras**, but without proper order or guidance. Without learning from a guru, knowledge lacks structure and clarity.
4. Those who know, and know how much they know. These are the gurus.

There is also a fifth category, those who do not know, but think they know. They believe they are wise, but they are firmly rooted in ignorance. They identify with the body and believe themselves to be wise.

Consequence of False Knowledge

Such people repeatedly experience sorrow. Being ignorant themselves, they mislead others as well. This is compared to the blind leading the blind, where both fall into suffering again and again.

They believe they have attained their goal, but in reality, they have not. What they have attained are only material gains, without realizing how trivial and limited those gains truly are.

They remain in ignorance (**avidya**). Because of this ignorance, they identify themselves with the body or with the life force (**prana**). This mistaken identity is the direct consequence of not knowing the Self.

Such people may attain power, position, and wealth, and they feel satisfied with these achievements. They do not aspire for anything beyond this. However, they have not attained what they truly should have attained. In the previous verse, they were described as foolish. In this verse, they are referred to as childish. Their intellect does not mature in proportion to their physical age. Physical aging happens naturally by eating, sleeping, and maintaining the body, but the growth of understanding requires inquiry and reflection.

They perform the prescribed rituals and consider that performance itself as the ultimate goal, without seeking knowledge. If while pursuing material gains, they happen to live a meritorious life, they may attain heaven. However, once the fruits of their merits are exhausted, they fall from heaven and lose that comfort.

If a person does not have the goal of attaining liberation, they will never take the path that leads to it. Instead, they will follow other paths to achieve other goals. Most people remain on the path of action (**karma**) aimed at comfort and enjoyment.

Some may even engage in social work. However, that alone is not sufficient. Working only for others and never working on oneself is also a waste of a lifetime. One should not dedicate one's entire life only to serving others. One must also serve oneself by seeking the knowledge of the Self. Attaining Self-knowledge is an essential responsibility.

For many people who are constantly active, the **rajas guna** does not transform into **sattva guna**. Instead of gaining clarity, they keep looking for more activity. Such people believe they are working for others, but in truth, they are working only for themselves. They fail to recognize that this is not the true purpose of life.

They do not know about **Atma Jnana**. They are described as foolish among the foolish. They waste their precious human life. The maximum they can attain is a higher place in heaven, and when the accumulated fruits of their actions are exhausted, they return to this realm or another similar realm. They may be born again as a human or even as an animal.

This human body is the greatest gift. With it, one can choose to act rightly or wrongly, and more importantly, one can choose to seek liberation. The **Upanishad** highlights that failing to use this opportunity for Self-knowledge is the greatest loss.

Verse 8:

Being ignorant but thinking they are learned, the fools afflicted with troubles go about like the blind leading the blind. 1.2.8

Verse 9:

Children, immersed in ignorance, flatter themselves, saying: We have accomplished life's purpose. Because these performers of karma do not know the Truth owing to their desire, they fall from Heaven after the fruits of their karma are consumed. 1.2.9

Verse 10:

These ignorant men regarding sacrificial and charitable work as the highest, do not know any other good. Having enjoyed the heights of Heaven won by their good deeds, they enter again into this or even inferior world. 1.2.10

Upasana

Upasana is also called **dhyana**. It involves the control of the senses and the mind and is an action performed by the mind rather than by the body.

Working at the mental level is more difficult than physical action, but it has greater power, and therefore the results are far superior.

By performing **Upasana**, one can also attain material well-being and subtle enjoyments. However, the ultimate fruit of **Upasana** is **Brahmaloka**, whereas the fruit of **Karma** is **Svargaloka** after death.

Brahmaloka is the highest realm attainable within **Samsara**. Although **meditation** can be used for well-being in this world, when **dhyana** is not practiced for fulfilling personal desires, it helps one gain control over the senses and the mind—namely **Sama**, **Dama**, and **Samadhana**. These are essential qualifications for mental concentration.

When these practices are done solely for mental purity, without any other desire, one gains calmness of mind and mastery over it. Such a person becomes qualified for **Para Vidya**.

Who should practice Upasana

Upasana is mainly recommended for those in the **Vanaprastha Ashrama**—people who have completed their worldly duties and have retired from active life. However, individuals in other **ashramas** can also practice **Upasana**. Through this practice, desires gradually subside and the mind becomes pure.

One must gradually withdraw from excessive responsibilities and dedicate time to **japa**, **dhyana**, and solitude.

When one has the physical and mental strength to live in solitude, one should cultivate this habit. Later, when the body and mind become weak, one may no longer have the capacity to perform upasana.

When a person fully withdraws from responsibilities and retires into the forest, they are prescribed two disciplines:

1. **Tapas**
2. **Ashrama Karma**, which includes silence, austerity, and meditation.

By performing **ashrama karma** and **dhyana**, the senses become calm—this is **sama** and **dama**. There are additional disciplines in this lifestyle, such as:

- Eating only what is obtained by begging.
- Eating very little.

- Eating only to sustain life, not for pleasure.

Even householders can take up certain aspects of this penance, while remaining at home, by adopting selected disciplines of the vanaprastha ashrama.

Result of Upasana

Those who perform **Upasana** and have purified themselves of sins are said to attain **Brahmaloka** after death.

Two paths after death

The **Upanishads** describe two paths taken by the soul after death:

1. **Krishna Gati:** This path leads to heaven (**Svargaloka)**, and after the enjoyment of its fruits, the journey ends and the soul returns.

2. **Shukla Gati:** Also known as **Brahma Gati** or **Surya Dvara**. Those who take this path reach **Brahmaloka**.

The ruler of **Brahmaloka** is **Hiranyagarbha**, also known as the first-born (**Brahma**). The ruler of **Svargaloka** is **Indra**.

Who is Hiranyagarbha

Hiranyagarbha is **Brahma**, the cosmic creator. He is referred to as **Amritam**, because he remains until the end of creation (**Srishti**). He does not die until dissolution occurs.

However, even this state is not liberation. It lasts only until the end of **Srishti**. The performer of **Upasana** goes to **this realm**.

Verse 11:

But those men who live in the forest on alms, practising penances suitable to their stations of life and contemplating such deities as Hiranyagarbha, depart, freed from impurities, by the Path of the Sun, to the place where that immortal and imperishable Being dwells. 1.2.11

This next verse acts as a bridge between the **Karma Kanda** and the **Jnana Kanda**. In it, six important themes are explained:

1. Who becomes qualified for **Para Vidya**,
2. How does one attain the Qualifications?
3. What qualification does one attain?
4. What must one do after attaining the qualification for jnana, what duties follow for him?
5. What kind of **Guru** should one approach?
6. And with what attitude should one approach the **Guru**?

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1. Who qualifies for Para Vidya?

The qualification for **Para Vidya** is explained using the word **Brahmana**. In this context, Brahmana does not refer to birth or social class. It refers to a person whose mind is predominantly governed by **Sattva Guna**, the quality of awareness and clarity. **Rajas Guna** is the quality of passion and restlessness, and **Tamas Guna** is the quality of ignorance and inertia. When the mind oscillates between **Rajas** and **Tamas**, it becomes trapped in attachment and aversion toward experiences. Such a mind reacts blindly to situations. A mind dominated by **Sattva**, however, observes experiences with awareness, gains discrimination, and matures into wisdom.

A wise and discriminating mind becomes capable of inquiry and reflection. This capacity for inquiry is the true qualification for **Para Vidya**. Such a person is called a Brahmana in **Jnana Kanda**.

It is important to understand that **Karma Kanda** and **Jnana Kanda** are distinct disciplines. In the **Karma Kanda**, the word Brahmana may indicate a person's **varna**. In the **Jnana Kanda**, the same word refers exclusively to inner qualification. Here, Brahmana means one who has discrimination, mastery over the senses, and a refined mind. This qualification has nothing to do with **varna**, caste, **ashrama**, or gender.

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2. How does one attain the Qualifications?

The question then arises as to how one gains this quality of awareness. This clarity and discrimination arise through a life lived as **Karma Yoga**. When actions are performed without selfish desire and with the right attitude, the mind becomes purified. Such a person naturally becomes a **Brahmana**. The **Vedas** describe the qualities of such a person as truthfulness, non-violence, physical and mental cleanliness, and freedom from greed.

How does such a person arrive at this state?

The answer to this is that the **Brahmana** gains maturity by carefully examining the world. This examination is called **Pariksha**. Here, the word "world" does not refer only to this

physical world. It includes all the manifested realms, including **Svargaloka** and **Brahmaloka**. One examines the world that one has earned through one's own **karma**.

We are born into a particular world because of our **karma**. We are born to specific parents, placed among certain people, and exposed to particular circumstances, whether we like them or not. We encounter only certain objects and experiences, all determined by our **karma**. One must examine this lived experience deeply. This examination does not mean creating a new chain of actions and their consequences. A person dominated by **rajas** and **tamas gunas** continues to create new attachments and aversions, thereby sowing seeds for future births.

The **Brahmana**, whose mind is rooted in **sattva guna**, does not keep generating new chains of actions and their consequences. Instead, he reflects upon the experiences that have already come to him. It is neither possible nor necessary to examine all fourteen worlds of creation. Careful observation of the world one has already attained is sufficient. Through this examination, one understands the true nature of the world and becomes inwardly mature, thus ready for **Para Vidya**.

How does one Inquire (Pariksha)

To do **Pariksha**, three methods (**Upaya**) are used:

1. Experience (**Anubhava**)
2. Inference (**Anumana**) using reasoning (**Yukti**)
3. Scriptural testimony (**Agama** / **Shastra**)

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1. Anubhava – Examination through Experience

From our own experience we can understand that nothing in the world gives permanent satisfaction. The world is essentially unsatisfactory if we expect lasting happiness from people, objects, or situations.

- As children we had certain desires; as adults we have different desires.
- The objects change, but the desire itself never ends.
- This shows that external things do not give permanent happiness.

When a person lives a life of **karma yoga** and **dharma**, discrimination (**viveka**) develops. With this clarity, one begins to examine life and realizes:

- No object can give eternal satisfaction.

- People, circumstances, possessions, and even the body are impermanent.
- Even things we have not yet experienced will also be impermanent.

Only when we analyze our experiences, not merely live through them, wisdom arises. This understanding leads to **detachment** (**vairagya**).

If a person cannot examine life deeply, it usually means **sattva guna** is not predominant in him. Living a **dharmic** life increases **sattva**, which brings clarity and discrimination (**viveka**).

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2. Anumana – Examination through Inference

Anumana means knowledge gained through logical inference using **yukti** (reasoning).

Example: When we see smoke on a distant mountain, we infer that there is fire, even if we do not see the fire directly.

In the same way, by observing patterns in life, the wise conclude:

- Everything produced in the world is impermanent.
- What is gained can be lost.
- Happiness does not truly come from objects.

We often think objects give happiness, but analysis shows:

- The same object that once gave joy can later become a source of sorrow.
- If happiness were inside the object, it would always give happiness to everyone.
- Therefore, happiness actually arises from the mind, not from the object.

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3. Agama – Examination through Scriptures

Agama means relying on the authority of the **Shastras** (scriptures).

The scriptures explain:

- Even heaven (**Svarga**) is impermanent.
- When the merit (**Punya**) earned through good actions is exhausted, one returns from heaven.

Thus, scriptural teaching confirms what experience and inference also show—no worldly result is permanent.

When a person studies the scriptures properly, deep understanding arises, leading to **renunciation** (**vairagya**), which is an essential qualification for liberation (**Moksha**).

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3. What qualification does one attain?

The qualification one attains is **vairagya** (dispassion).

How does one attain vairagya?

Dispassion is attained through **viveka**, the ability to discriminate between truth and delusion. It is attained through continuous inquiry and discrimination. When the fruit of viveka ripens, it becomes vairagya. Without vairagya, viveka remains incomplete. If discrimination does not lead to dispassion, it is of no use. The true benefit of viveka is experienced only when it transforms into vairagya.

How does discrimination turn into dispassion?

By constantly reflecting upon the limitations and sorrow inherent in **Samsara**. One must repeatedly contemplate the unavoidable realities of life:

- Birth
- Existence
- Growth
- Old age
- Disease
- Death

Through continuous inquiry and reflection on these facts, the mind gradually becomes detached. This detachment is **vairagya**.

On what must one attain dispassion?

One must attain **vairagya** toward this entire world. This includes:

- Everything one has seen
- Everything one has experienced
- Everything one has heard about
- Everything one may experience in the future

When delusion fades, dispassion naturally arises toward all worldly experiences, past, present and future. Even toward things not yet experienced, one understands that they are **Anatma** (not the Self) and impermanent.

A person with vairagya does not hate the world. Dispassion is not hatred. Rather, he no longer seeks indulgence or lasting fulfillment from it.

Vairagya is not an action. It is an attitude. It is the fruit of **viveka**.

In this world, almost anything can be attained through action (**karma**). However, everything attained through action is also impermanent. Therefore, what is produced cannot be eternal.

Brahman, which is of the nature of **Moksha**, cannot be attained through action. It is not a result created by **karma**.

When this understanding becomes firm, the seeker realizes:

- No action can produce liberation
- No worldly achievement can give permanent freedom
- **Moksha** is not a result of action

This clarity, born of **vairagya**, changes one's attitude toward the world. He gives up pursuing worldly achievements as a means to liberation. He no longer performs actions seeking ultimate fulfillment from them.

How is the mind of one who has attained dispassion?

One who has attained dispassion clearly understands that everything gained through **karma** is temporary. Whatever is produced by action will eventually be lost.

From this understanding, he concludes that the Ultimate Reality he seeks cannot be something newly produced. It must already exist. Therefore, he seeks that which is already present within himself — the Self.

Why seek that which is already within?

Although the Self is ever-present, it is not recognized because of **avidya** (ignorance). Since ignorance is the problem, only **jnana** (knowledge) can remove it. Action cannot remove ignorance. Therefore, one with **vairagya** understands firmly that the permanent can be gained only through **jnana**, not through **karma**.

How does one attain knowledge of Brahman?

Just as any knowledge requires a valid instrument, **jnana** also requires a proper means of knowledge. The instrument for Self-knowledge is the **Upanishads**.

One who has **vairagya** understands that Self-knowledge must be gained from the **Upanishads**, and that it must be learned from a competent **Guru**. He recognizes the importance and necessity of a guru.

Why is a Guru necessary?

All our ordinary knowledge comes through the experience of **anatma vishaya** — objects that are not the Self. Our language and concepts are based entirely on this experience.

The **Upanishads** must therefore use familiar words from our experience. However, our experience is limited to **anatma**, while the Self (**Atma**) is not an object of experience.

How then can the Upanishads teach that which cannot be objectified or directly described?

Upanishads use a unique method of teaching. Sometimes they employ paradox, negation, and even seemingly contradictory statements. Through this special method, that which cannot be directly expressed in words is indicated.

This subtle method cannot be understood independently. It must be unfolded by a living teacher — a **Guru** who belongs to a **Guru–Shishya Parampara** (teaching lineage). Without proper guidance, the teaching can easily be misunderstood.

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4. What must one do after attaining the qualification for jnana, what duties follow for him?

The attitude of the seeker

One who has attained **vairagya** recognizes the limitations of his own intellect. He understands that reasoning alone cannot reveal the Self.

With humility and a burning desire for liberation (**Mumukshutva**), he approaches the **Guru**. He seeks knowledge not casually, but with deep commitment.

Such a prepared mind alone is ready for true **Jnana**.

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5. What kind of Guru should one approach?

Who is a Shrotriya?

A **shrotriya** is one who has studied the **Shastras** under a **guru**. He must have learned from a proper **Guru–Shishya Parampara**, a traditional lineage of teaching that traces back ultimately to **Sadashiva** as **Dakshinamurti** as the first guru.

Such a teacher has:

- Systematically studied the scriptures
- Understood the methodology of teaching
- Received knowledge through authentic traditions (**Sampradaya**)**.**

Having studied through a proper lineage, he understands not only the content but also the teaching methodology. Even during his own learning, he imbibes the method of instruction.

Therefore, only a **shrotriya** can initiate a seeker into the traditional and systematic study of the **Upanishads**.

However, even if one is a **shrotriya**, he may not necessarily have attained liberation. Due to habitual tendencies and mental patterns, he may still identify himself with **anatma** and may not be Self-realized.

Who is a Brahma-Nishtha?

A **Brahma-Nishtha** is one who is firmly established in the knowledge of **Brahman**. He has not only gained knowledge but abides steadily in it.

He may have gone through **shravana** (listening to the scriptures), **manana** (contemplation of the scriptures) , and **nididhyasana** (continuous contemplation or deep meditation on the Self — Atman), and become liberated (**Mukta**). His life reflects freedom from attachment, anger, aversion, and selfish desire.

Why do we need a Brahma-Nishtha?

When a student approaches a **guru**, he comes as a **samsari**, full of attachment and aversion.

If the teacher merely speaks about **Akshara Brahman** and says one must give up attachment and aversion, the student may understand only intellectually. He may not develop firm faith.

But when he sees a teacher who lives free from attachment and aversion, who embodies the teaching in daily life, faith arises naturally.

The student observes the teacher's conduct and values. By seeing the teaching lived, he gains conviction that knowledge truly removes sorrow.

Thus, a **Brahma-Nishtha** gives strength and faith to the student.

Why both qualities are necessary

A **shrotriya** is required to unfold the scriptures methodically. A **Brahma-Nishtha** is required to embody the truth. Without being a **shrotriya**, one cannot teach correctly. Without being a **Brahma-Nishtha**, one cannot inspire deep faith.

Therefore, the ideal teacher is one who is both.

The Three Types of Gurus

1. Uttama Guru (Shrotriya Brahma-Nishtha)

One who is both a **shrotriya** and a **Brahma-Nishtha**.

- He teaches correctly according to the **Shastras**
- He lives the teaching fully
- The student benefits from both his instruction and his life

Half the benefit comes from his teaching, and half from observing his way of living. Such a teacher is the highest type of **Guru**.

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2. Madhyama Guru (Kevala Shrotriya)

A **Kevala Shrotriya** has studied the scriptures properly but may not be firmly established in them.

- His words are correct
- His teaching method is correct
- But his lifestyle may not reflect them completely.

A student can gain knowledge from him. However, observing inconsistencies in his life may weaken faith.

He can guide intellectually, but his life may not fully inspire a student to be on the path.

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3. Adhama Guru (Kevala Brahma-Nishtha)

A **Kevala Brahma-Nishtha** may have realized the truth but has not studied the scriptures methodically under a **Guru** in a lineage.

Such a person may be a **Yoga-Bhrashta** — someone who had spiritual maturity from previous lifetime's effort and quickly attains realization.

He may:

- Be noble in character
- Live in alignment with truth
- Reflect great purity

However, because he has not learned the traditional method of teaching, he may not be able to systematically guide others.

Sometimes his teaching may appear contradictory because he may directly negate everything without properly preparing the student.

He may be a great person, but not necessarily a teacher.

The Scriptural Method of Teaching

According to the **Shastras**, teaching proceeds in two stages:

1. First, one accepts the world and **Ishvara** as real at the empirical level
2. Then, through inquiry, one negates the world, the body, and even the teacher as ultimately non-separate from **Brahman**

A properly trained **shrotriya** unfolds this method carefully.

A **kevala Brahma-Nishtha** may begin directly with negation, but this is not the prescribed method of teaching, because for an unprepared student the world and creation are the truth.

How to Recognize a Guru

To determine whether a teacher is a **shrotriya**, one may respectfully ask about his **Guru** and the lineage in which he was trained. If he has not studied under a teacher in an authentic lineage, he should not be approached as a **Guru**.

To recognize a **Brahma-Nishtha** is more difficult. One cannot directly see realization. However, certain indications may be observed:

- Consistency between words and actions
- Alignment with **Vedantic** values
- Having good traits.

The scriptures say that if one has gained knowledge from a proper lineage and lives fully in accordance with scriptural values, one may conclude that he is a **Brahma-Nishtha**.

The seeker with strong **vairagya** and **mumukshutva** must approach a teacher who is a **Shrotriya Brahma-Nishtha**.

Such a teacher alone can:

- Reveal the method of the **Upanishads**
- Remove doubts systematically
- Inspire faith through lived wisdom
- Guide the student to **Moksha**

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6. With what attitude should a student approach the Guru?

The scriptures describe the seeker as approaching the **guru** with **samitpani**.

Samitpani

The word **Samitpani** is derived from **Samidh** (sacrificial fuel sticks) and **Pani** (hand). It refers to a student approaching the guru with fuel sticks in hand.

Symbolically, this represents:

- Faith
- Devotion
- Readiness to serve
- Humility

It indicates that the student comes not casually, but with reverence and commitment.

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1. Shraddha (Faith)

Shraddha means trust in the words of the scriptures and the **guru**.

Why is faith required?

The knowledge revealed by the **Vedas** often appears to contradict the student's experience. The student experiences himself as a **Samsari**, bound by sorrow and limitation. But the **Vedas** declare him to be **Asamsari**, ever free.

This creates an apparent conflict.

Shraddha acts as a bridge between experience and revelation. It allows the student to temporarily set aside his experiential conclusions and stay open to the teaching.

Without faith, the student will cling to personal experience as the only reality and will not be able to assimilate the knowledge.

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2. Devotion to the Guru

Devotion is affection and reverence toward the guru.

When a student is devoted, the mind becomes open and receptive. Often, students approach with preconceived notions about spirituality and knowledge. If the teaching contradicts their prior beliefs, they may resist it.

Devotion softens the mind and removes resistance. It allows the student to listen without defensiveness.

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3. Readiness to Serve

It symbolizes the effort taken to collect sacrificial twigs from mountains and distant forest paths.

Knowledge is not easily obtained. Just as one must climb and exert effort to obtain the twigs a student must be willing to serve and put forth effort.

Service has a deeper purpose — it reduces **Ahamkara** (ego).

Even if a student comes from a privileged background or possesses scholarly learning, pride can obstruct spiritual growth. Through service, humility naturally develops.

Although the **Guru** may also benefit from service, it is truly the student who benefits more. Service purifies the mind and prepares it for knowledge.

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4. Humility

Intellectual humility is essential.

No matter how much knowledge one has acquired in other fields, when approaching the guru, one must be willing to listen afresh.

Without humility, one cannot properly receive the **Shastras**. Pride in one's learning blocks understanding.

Humility allows the student to listen to the **guru** sincerely.

What must a Guru do when a qualified student approaches him?

When a qualified student approaches a guru, the guru must teach him.

The teacher recognizes that he himself was once in the same position — a seeker filled with longing, searching for guidance, and possessing a burning desire for liberation (**Mumukshutva**). At that time, he was blessed to receive knowledge from his own guru.

Now, being in a position to give, he teaches out of compassion.

Although the **Shastras** do not impose teaching as an obligatory duty upon him, a true teacher willingly accepts this responsibility. Out of gratitude for what he received and compassion for the suffering seeker, he imparts knowledge.

Teaching thus becomes an expression of compassion and tradition — the continuation of the **Guru–Shishya Parampara**.

Verse 12:

Let a Brahmin having examined the worlds produced by karma be free from desires, knowing nothing that is eternal can be produced by what is not eternal. And in order to acquire the knowledge of the eternal, let him approach a guru, who is versed in the Vedas and centered in the Brahman, with (samidh) in hand.1.2.12

Verse 13:

To that pupil who has duly approached him, whose mind is completely serene and whose senses are controlled, let the guru impart the Brahmavidya by which the true immortal purusha is known. 1.2.13

Mundaka 2

Kandaka 1

Chapter 2 – Part 1

Emphasis on Para Vidya

From here, there is greater emphasis on **Para Vidya** (higher knowledge). The knowledge through which one attains **Brahman** (the Absolute Reality) is called **Para Vidya**.

Here Brahman is introduced as Upadana Karana (material cause) with an example. All beings come from Brahman and eventually dissolve back into Brahman. Since beings arise from Brahman and return to Brahman, they are also sustained and protected by Brahman.

The text states that **Akshara Brahman** (imperishable Brahman) is the cause of everything that is created.

Two Types of Causes

When any object is created, two types of causes are involved:

1. **Upadana Karana** (material cause)
2. **Nimitta Karana** (intelligent cause)

Upadana Karana (material cause) is that from which something is made. It is also that in **which** the object exists, is sustained, and finally dissolves.

Nimitta Karana (intelligent cause) is the cause responsible for initiating or designing the creation.

Brahman as the Material Cause

In this verse, **Akshara Brahman** (imperishable Brahman) is introduced as the **Upadana Karana** (material cause).

The **Upanishad** uses the example of fire to help us understand the material cause. From fire many sparks arise. For all the sparks, fire is the cause. In the same way, Brahman is the cause from which all beings arise and go back into.

Just as the sparks share the same characteristics as the fire, such as heat and light, the beings that emerge from Brahman also share the same essential nature.

Why Different Names?

If fire and sparks are essentially the same, why are they referred to by different names?

The difference arises because of **maya** (cosmic illusion) or **namarupa** (name and form).

For example, when pots are made from clay, we still say that pots are created, even though their substance is nothing but clay. The difference exists only in name and form.

Similarly, although everything arises from **Brahman**, differentiation appears because of their **namarupa**.

Just as many sparks arise from fire and later merge back into it, all beings arise from Brahman and eventually dissolve back into Brahman.

Verse 1:

As from a blazing fire, thousands of fiery sparks of the same form leap out, so do various beings come forth from the imperishable Brahman and return unto Him again, this is the Truth. 2.1.1

Nature of Brahman

The verse states that the characteristics described about **Brahman** are true. **Akshara Brahman** (imperishable Brahman) is the ultimate reality behind all creation.

The law of **karma phala** (result of actions) is also said to be **satya** (certain and inevitable) because the results of actions will certainly manifest, just as sparks certainly arise from fire.

Although beings appear different due to **namarupa** (name and form), their **Svarupa** (true nature) is the same as **Brahman**.

Verse 2:

He is the self-luminous and formless Purusha, unborn and existing within and without, devoid of prana and mind, pure and higher than the supreme Imperishable. 2.1.2

When is Brahman the Material Cause?

When can **Brahman** (the Absolute Reality) be called the **Upadana Karana** (material cause) of everything?

Consider the example of clay. Clay becomes the material cause of pots only when it takes different forms. If there is only clay and no transformation into pots, it is not referred to as the cause of pots.

A cause is identified only when a creation appears from it. Creation means that something appears in a different form from the original substance.

When clay takes a new form, it becomes a pot. Only then is clay called the material cause of the pot.

In order for clay to become the cause of pots, it must take on **namarupa** (name and form).

In the same way, **Brahman** becomes the **Karana** (cause) of the universe only when associated with **Maya** (cosmic illusion or creative power).

Maya, also called **Prakriti** (primordial nature), is responsible for **namarupa** (name and form).

Nature of Akshara Brahman

Akshara Brahman (imperishable Brahman) is described as being without form or attributes.

It is also described as **Purusha** (the all-pervading consciousness). This **Purusha** is present everywhere, not limited by space, and is also present within our own body.

It has:

- no birth
- none of the six modifications (the six changes experienced by embodied beings: birth, existence, growth, transformation, decline, and death)

It is also:

- without **Prana** (vital force)
- without **Manas** (mind)
- without even the **Karana Sharira** (causal body)

In other words, **Brahman** is beyond all bodies and limitations.

Brahman is superior to Maya

Brahman is superior to **Maya**. **Brahman** is always independent, while **Maya** is dependent on **Brahman**.

From **Maya** arise the different levels of creation:

1. **Karana Jagat** (causal world)
2. **Sukshma Jagat** (subtle world)
3. **Sthula Jagat** (gross world)

Since **Maya** is the cause of the subtle and gross worlds, it is superior to them. However, **Maya** itself is inferior to **Brahman**, because it depends on Brahman. Just as clay is superior to pots, since pots arise from clay, **Brahman** is superior to **Maya** and all creation.

Verse 3:

From Him are born prana, mind, all the sense-organs, Akasa, air, fire, water and earth, which supports all. 2.1.3

Relationship Between Brahman and Maya

Brahman (the Absolute Reality) is **Anadi** (beginningless, without origin). It has no birth and always exists.

A question then arises: If **Brahman** is beginningless, when did **Maya** come into being?

The **Shastras** (scriptures) declare that **Maya** (cosmic illusion or creative power) is also **Anadi** (beginningless). Its origin cannot be determined.

This raises an important question: What exactly is the relationship between **Brahman** and **Maya**?

Many people assume one of the following two possibilities:

1. **Maya** and **Brahman** are two completely separate entities.
2. **Maya** is a part or power of **Brahman**.

However, the **Vedic scriptures** state that the relationship is neither of these two.

Can Maya be Separate from Brahman?

To examine this, the scriptures describe **Brahman** as:

- **Asanga** (unattached, without relationship)
- **Advaita** (non dual, without a second)
- **Purnam** (complete and all pervading)

If **Maya** were separate from **Brahman**, then there would be a place where **Brahman** is not present. But **Purnam** means that **Brahman** exists everywhere.

If there were any place without **Brahman**, then **Brahman** would not be infinite or complete. This would contradict the characteristics given in the scriptures. Therefore, **Maya** cannot be a separate entity from **Brahman**.

Is Maya a Part of Brahman?

Another possibility is that **Maya** is a part of **Brahman**. However, if something is a part of **Brahman**, then any change in that part must also affect **Brahman**. But the **Shastras** declare that **Brahman** is:

- **Nirvikara** (unchanging)
- **Asanga** (unattached)
- **Nishkala** (without parts)

Since **Brahman** never undergoes any change, **Maya** cannot be a part of **Brahman**.

The **Shastras** explain that **Maya** is dependent on **Brahman**. This dependence is the true relationship between them. To understand this, the scriptures give several examples.

Example 1: Shadow and the Person

Consider a person and his shadow. The shadow depends on the person for its existence. It cannot exist independently. However, the shadow does not affect the person in any way. Similarly:

- **Brahman** is the independent reality.
- **Maya** depends on **Brahman** for its existence.

This relationship is called the **Satya Mithya** relationship.

- **Satya** (absolute reality) is that which exists independently.
- **Mithya** (dependent reality) exists only because of something else.

Brahman is **Satya**, and **Maya** is **Mithya**.

Example 2: Rope and Snake

Another classic example is the rope and snake illustration. In darkness, a rope may appear to be a snake. When light is brought, we realize that it was always a rope and the snake never truly existed. The snake appears temporarily and disappears when knowledge arises. However, the rope:

- existed before the illusion
- existed during the illusion
- continues to exist after the illusion disappears

Similarly, when knowledge arises, one understands that only **Brahman** truly exists.

Example 3: Ocean and Waves

Another example is the ocean and its waves. The waves appear in the ocean and disappear back into the ocean.The wave has only a temporary appearance, while the ocean continues to exist.

Similarly, the world appears because of **Maya**, but the underlying reality is always **Brahman**.

Brahman is Sat and Maya is Mithya

The world appears to exist because of **Maya**. When the light of **Jnana** (knowledge) arises, one understands that only **Brahman** truly exists.

Thus:

- **Brahman** is **Sat** (the absolute truth).
- **Maya** is **Mithya** (dependent and not absolutely real).

Therefore, **Akshara Brahman** (imperishable Brahman) is superior to **Maya**, and all creation ultimately depends on **Brahman**.

Creation

Creation happens in stages.

Step 1: Beginning of Manifestation

Before creation, **Brahman** (the Absolute Reality) in association with **Maya** (cosmic illusion or creative power) becomes ready for manifestation.

From this association arise the five subtle elements, called **Pancha Sukshma Bhutas** (five subtle elements):

- Sound (**Shabda**) is heard via the ears.
- Touch (**Sparsha**) is felt via the skin.
- Vision (**Roopa**) is seen via the eyes.
- Taste (**Rasa**) is felt via the tongue.
- Smell (**Gandha**) is perceived via the nose.

These subtle elements are the first stage of creation.

Step 2: Creation of Subtle Bodies

From these subtle elements arise the subtle bodies, called **Sukshma Sharira** (subtle body).

The subtle body includes:

- mind
- intellect
- senses
- vital forces

These are not visible but form the inner functioning of beings.

Step 3: Grossification of Elements

The subtle elements then undergo a process called **Panchikarana** (the process of mixing the five subtle elements).

Through this mixing, the subtle elements become gross elements, called Pancha Maha Bhutas (five gross elements).

These are the physical elements that we experience in the world. They are:

- Akasha (space)
- Vayu (air)
- Agni (fire)
- Apah (water)
- Prithvi (earth)

Step 4: Manifestation of the Gross World

From the gross elements arise the gross universe and all living beings. Thus the visible world and all bodies come into existence.

The Universe as the Body of Ishvara

The entire manifested universe is considered the gross body of Ishvara (the Lord or cosmic intelligence).

When **Ishvara** identifies with the entire universe and sustains it from within, He is called **Antaryami** (the inner controller).

Different Names of Ishvara Based on Identification

Depending on which level of creation **Ishvara** identifies with, different names are used.

Antaryami (Inner Controller)

When **Ishvara** is associated with the causal state and controls everything from within, He is called **Antaryami**.

Hiranyagarbha (Cosmic Subtle Mind)

When **Ishvara** identifies with the subtle creation, He is called **Hiranyagarbha** (the cosmic subtle mind).

Virat (Cosmic Gross Form)

When **Ishvara** identifies with the gross universe, He is called **Virat** (the cosmic physical form).

Description of Virat Purusha (Cosmic Being)

The scriptures describe the universe as the cosmic body of Virat.

- Heaven (Svarga Loka) is His head.
- The Sun and Moon are His eyes, through which He sees the world day and night.
- The directions (Akasha) are His ears.
- The Vedas are His speech.
- Vayu (air) is His Prana (vital force).
- All beings and creation form His heart.
- The Earth is His feet.

Thus, **Virat** exists everywhere and in the hearts of all beings.

Creation of Human Beings

The scriptures also explain how human beings come into existence.

When we speak about birth, we are referring only to the gross body, not the subtle or causal bodies.

A person has three bodies:

- **Karana Sharira** (causal body)
- **Sukshma Sharira** (subtle body)
- **Sthula Sharira** (gross physical body)

Parents only give the gross body. They do not create the subtle body or causal body.

Therefore:

- Birth means gaining a gross body.
- Death means losing the gross body.

The subtle and causal bodies continue even after death.

The Five Stages Before Birth (Pancha Agni)

The scriptures describe that before a person is born, the subtle being passes through five stages. This process is called **Pancha Agni** (five fires).

Stage 1: Heavenly Body

After death, the being takes a body called **Jala Sharira** and goes to **Svarga** (heaven).

There he experiences the results of his **Punya** (meritorious actions) and descends down when the punya is over.

Stage 2: Cloud Body

When the merits are exhausted, the being takes another form in the clouds.

Stage 3: Rain

From the clouds, he descends as **rain**.

The rain falls upon **plants and trees**.

Stage 4: Entry into the Father

Through food eaten by a man, the being enters the father's body.

Stage 5: Entry into the Mother

Finally, through conception, the being enters the mother's womb, where the gross body begins to develop.

This completes the **Pancha Agni process**, after which the being is born as a human.

Verse 4:

This is He, whose head is the heavens, whose eyes are the sun, and the moon, whose ears are the four directions, whose speech is the Vedas, and breath, the wind, whose heart is all the universe and from whose feet the earth proceeded. He is, indeed, the inner Self of all beings 2.1.4

Verse 5:

From him come the fire whose fuel is the sun; from the moon the rains which nourish the herbs on earth. Nurtured by the plans the male casts his seed into the woman, thus all living beings are born of the Purusha. 2.1.5

Actions and Rituals also arise from Brahman

The Upanishad then declares that not only the world, but all human activities also arise from Brahman. From Brahman arise:

- Karma (actions)
- Karma Sadhana (means to perform actions)

- Yajna (sacrificial rituals)
- Vedas (sacred knowledge)
- Yajna performers
- Yajna procedures
- Yajna instruments
- Lokas (different worlds)

Even the results of actions come from Brahman. Thus, every part of ritual life originates from Brahman.

Paths of the Soul after Death

After death, a person may take different **Gatis** (paths), depending on their actions. There are four paths that are explained here

1. Krishna Gati (the dark path)

A person who performs **karma** (ritual actions) with desire for pleasure follows **Krishna Gati**. Such a person goes to **Svargaloka** (heaven) to experience the results of good actions.

2. Shukla Gati (the bright path)

A person who practices karma along with upasana (devotional meditation) and has control over the mind and senses follows **Shukla Gati**. Such a person reaches **Brahmaloka** (the world of Brahma) and experiences higher spiritual joy.

3. Adho Gati (downward path)

People who live a life of **Adharma** (unrighteous actions) and uncontrolled desires take the **Adho Gati**. They may be born again as animals or experience suffering in lower worlds.

4. Agati (pathless state)

The **Jnani** (one who has realized Brahman) attains **Moksha** (liberation), that path is called **Agati**, meaning no further travel or rebirth. They are completely free from the cycle of birth and death.

Nature of Lokas (Worlds)

Some people believe that heaven and hell are only emotional states experienced in this world. However, the **Vedas** declare that Lokas are real planes of existence.

If someone says “there are no other planes of existence”, that claim is based on their personal belief or assumption, because they have no direct proof that such worlds do not exist.

Just as someone outside a room cannot prove whether a cat is inside or not, similarly one cannot prove the absence of other worlds.

Similarly, when someone says “there are other planes of existence”, that too is a belief. However, in this case the belief is supported by the Vedas (the revealed scriptures), which are considered a valid source of knowledge in Vedanta.

In Vedanta, the Vedas are accepted as **pramana** (a valid means of knowledge) for matters that cannot be known through perception or inference. Just as our senses reveal the physical world, the Vedas reveal realities that are beyond the reach of the senses, such as lokas, karma phala, and the journey of the soul after death. Therefore:

- Denying the existence of other worlds is only a personal assumption.
- Accepting their existence is also a belief, but it is supported by scriptural revelation.

Beings obtain different bodies suitable for experiencing those worlds. The existence of these worlds cannot be proven through ordinary perception. However, the scriptures reveal them.

Everything arises from Brahman

The Upanishad continues by declaring that all beings and their experiences arise from Brahman. From **Brahman** arise:

- Devas (celestial beings)
- Human beings
- Animals
- Birds
- Prana (life force)
- Apana (downward vital force)
- Food
- Tapas (spiritual discipline)

- Shraddha (faith)
- Satya (truthfulness)
- Brahmacharya (self discipline)

All parts of **Yajna** also come from **Brahman**.

Yajna compared to Human Experience

The Upanishad symbolically compares human life to a **yajna**.

- The body is the Homa Kundam (sacrificial altar)
- The senses are the fire
- The sense activities are the offerings
- Knowledge is the result of this inner sacrifice

The Upanishad also states that the seven sense openings come from **Brahman**:

- Two eyes
- Two ears
- Two nostrils
- One mouth

Thus, everything in existence originates from **Brahman**.

Verse 6:

From Him comes the Rig, the Sama, the Yajur, Diksha, all sacrifices, all Kratus, Dakshina, the year, the sacrificer and the worlds which the moon sanctifies and the sun illuminates. 2.1.6

Verse 7:

By Him are begotten the various devas, the sadhyas, men, cattle, birds and also prana and apana, rice and corn, penance, faith, truth, Brahmacharya and injunction. 2.1.7

Verse 8:

From Him sprung the seven pranas, the seven flames, the seven kinds of fuel, the seven oblations and also the seven planes where move the pranas, lying in the cave, which are seven in each living being. 2.1.8

Verse 9:

From Him came the oceans, all the mountains, and the diverse rivers; from Him came, all the plants and taste, by which encircled by the gross elements, the intermediate Atman, i.e., subtle body is seated. 2.1.9

The Three Major Concepts

Having described Brahman as everything, some of the most important concepts are explained here. The following verses explain three major concepts:

1. **Brahman Swarupa** (the nature of Brahman)
2. **Jiva Brahman Aikyam** (unity of the individual and Brahman)
3. **Jnana Phalam** (the result of knowledge)

Brahman Swarupa (The Nature of Brahman)

The Upanishad declares that everything that is manifested is **Purusha** (the cosmic being). The entire world is **Brahman Swarupa** (the expression of Brahman).

The Upanishad explains that life in this world is not accidental but determined by one's **karma phala** (fruits of past actions). The place of birth, the family and parents one is born to, the circumstances of life, the people one encounters, and the situations one experiences are all shaped by the results of actions performed in previous lives.

The Upanishad first **accepts the world** and then later reveals that everything is **Brahman**.

This teaching is explained through the rope and snake example. When a person mistakes a rope for a snake:

1. First the teacher acknowledges the snake
2. Then reveals that the snake is actually the rope
3. Finally shows that the snake never truly existed

Similarly, the Upanishad first discusses the world and then reveals that only **Brahman** exists.

Brahman as the Material Cause

Purusha (Brahman) is the **material cause of the universe**. It is the source of:

- creation
- sustenance
- dissolution

Three Characteristics of a Material Cause

A material cause has three characteristics.

1. Presence in the effect

The material cause exists fully in the object it produces. Example: clay exists in all pots. Without clay, the pot cannot exist.

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2. The cause remains unchanged

Changes in the pot do not affect the clay. Thus clay is **Avikara** (unchanging).

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3. The cause is indestructible

Even if the pot breaks, the clay still remains. Thus the material cause is **Avinashi** (indestructible).

Brahman as Existence

From these characteristics we understand that the ultimate cause must be **Sat** (pure existence). **Brahman** in the universe appears as existence itself. Every object exists because of this **Sat**. For example:

A book may change forms, it exists as a book, when torn apart, as pieces of paper and when burnt it is turned into ashes. But underlying all the changes is that it still exists. Only the forms have changed, but the underlying principle which is existence remains. Thus **Sat** never changed nor was it destroyed.

Similarly, our bodies exist only for a certain period of time. After death, the body may become mud or ash, and later it may become nourishment for plants and exist within them, and the cycle continues in different forms. However, existence itself does not undergo change or destruction.

The principle of **Brahman** in this world is present in the form of existence. Anything that exists is dependent on **Brahman** for its existence. Therefore, the entire world is nothing but **Sat Brahman.**

Sat and the World

Everything in the world is dependent on **Sat Brahman**. The world is therefore **Sat Brahman** appearing through **namarupa** (name and form).

Jiva Brahman Aikyam

The Upanishad declares that **Jiva** (individual self) and **Brahman** are one. However, our senses only show us **namarupa** (forms and names). They never show us **Sat** (pure existence) alone. Because of this, we forget the existence principle and focus only on forms. This leads to **Samsara** (cycle of suffering).

How can one understand Sat Brahman?

We generally understand and gain knowledge of objects around us by using our instruments, such as the five senses. For example, we acquire knowledge of books through our eyes. When we see an object with our eyes, it creates a thought in the mind, and through that thought we gain knowledge of that object. For instance, when we see a book, we gain knowledge of that book.

When we gain knowledge of the book, we understand two aspects (**amsam)** or components:

1. We understand that the book exists.
2. We understand the form of the book.

Similarly, when we hear something, we understand what was said and also that the words exist. When we smell something, we experience the smell and also recognize that the smell exists.

Thus, whenever we experience anything through the five senses, we gain knowledge of:

- the object,
- its **namaroopa** (**nama roopa** – name and form), and
- the understanding that the object exists.

Why Sat Brahman cannot be perceived through the senses

Brahman is **Sat svarupa** – the nature of pure existence. However, we are not able to perceive existence alone without the form of the object. Whenever we see something, we always see the name and form along with its existence.

For example, we cannot see the existence of a book without also seeing the book itself. Our senses always reveal existence together with namarupa, never existence by itself.

The reason for Samsara

The reason for **samsara** – the cycle of worldly suffering is that we forget **Sat** (pure existence) and focus only on **namarupa** (name and form). Because of this, we experience sorrow.

Ideally, we should understand **Sat** and leave aside the name and form, but our senses cannot show **Sat** without the name and form.

Namarupa is bound to change and eventually perish. Yet we fail to see everything as **Brahman**, which is **Sat** (pure existence). Instead, namarupa attracts our attention and we ignore **Sat**.

The scriptures explain that we can never experience **Sat** alone through ordinary perception. All our experiences present **Sat** along with **namarupa**.

- If we use our sense organs, we perceive **Sat** together with **namarupa**.
- If we do not use our senses, as in sleep, **Sat** still exists, but we do not gain any knowledge.

Thus, whether we use the senses or not, we cannot directly understand **Sat** through sensory experience.

How then can Sat be understood?

The **Upanishads** ask whether there is anything that can be known without using the sense organs. There is indeed one such reality: **Atman**.

Atman is **Chit svarupa** – pure consciousness. It does not require the support of another object to be known. It is the nature of awareness and also the nature of existence.

Thus **Brahman** itself is **cit svarupa**, and that **cit svarupa** is none other than **Atman**.

If we search for **Sat** outside the **namarupa**, we will not find it. Instead, one must look within and recognize **Sat** as **Chit** (pure consciousness).

When we observe the world, we recognize **Sat** (existence). When we look within, we recognize **Chit** (consciousness). The scriptures teach that this **Sat** and this **Chit** are one, and that unity is **Brahman**.

This understanding reveals **Jeeva Brahman Aikyam** (**Jiva Brahman Aikya** – the oneness of the individual Self and Brahman).

Self-evident nature of the Self

Unlike a book, we do not need to see ourselves in order to know that we exist. No instrument, such as the eyes or ears, is required to know our own existence.

Our existence is self-evident. The **Atman** (Soul) stands as the witness of the mind.

What is the benefit of knowing this?

The one who understands this truth removes ignorance while still alive. A **samsari** (one bound by worldly existence) becomes liberated through this knowledge.

Shankaracharya explains two meanings of this liberation:

1. We are bound to the **namarupa** of the world. Through knowledge, we gain freedom from this **namarupa**.

2. Once this knowledge arises, the world and its afflictions lose their hold over us, and they no longer appear as ultimately real.

Result of this Knowledge (Jnana Phalam)

One who understands this truth removes ignorance while still living. Such a person is freed from **Samsara**. According to Shankaracharya, liberation means:

1. Freedom from attachment to **Nama Rupa**
2. Freedom from the suffering caused by the world

The **Jnani** (knower of truth) lives in the world but is no longer bound by it.

Verse 10:

The Purusha alone is all this universe—Karma and Tapas. He who knows this Brahman—the Supreme Immortal being as seated in the secret caverns of the heart cuts the knot of ignorance even during this life on earth. 2.1.10

Mundaka 2

Kandaka 2

Chapter 2 – Part 2

Mahavakya

Any statement that declares the oneness of the individual **(Jeeva)** and **Ishvara** is called a **Mahavakya** (great statement of the Upanishads).

In Vedanta, discussions generally fall under three types of inquiry:

1. **Tat Pada Vichara** (inquiry into “Tat” – Brahman or Ishvara): When the scriptures talk about creation **(srishti)**, **Ishvara**, or the nature of the universe, it is called **Tat Pada Vichara**.

2. **Tvam Pada Vichara** (inquiry into “Tvam” – the individual self or Jeeva): When the scriptures discuss the individual being **(Jeeva)** and its true nature, it is called **Tvam Pada Vichara**.

3. **Aikya Pada Vichara** (inquiry into the identity of Jeeva and Brahman): When the scriptures explain the oneness **(aikya)** of **Jeeva** and **Ishvara**, it is called **Aikya Pada Vichara**.

Every portion of **Vedanta** ultimately discusses one of these three topics.

In the previous section, **Tat Pada Vichara** was discussed. In this section, the Upanishad begins **Tvam Pada Vichara** and **Aikya Pada Vichara**.

Brahman as the Inner Self

Brahman is self-radiant and self-illuminating. It resides in the heart of the individual as the **Atman**. Whenever we see, hear, think, or experience anything, that **Brahman** is present as our **svarupa** (true nature).

Even in dream and deep sleep, **Parabrahman** (the Supreme Brahman) exists within us.

The intellect **(buddhi)** appears to move from one object to another as our thoughts change. Because of this, the consciousness **(cit)** within us seems to move from one object to another. This creates the impression that knowledge is shifting.

However, in reality, knowledge does not move. **Atman** itself is **cit svarupa** (pure consciousness).

Verse 1:

The Luminous Brahman dwells in the heart and is known to move there. It is the great support of all; In him is all this universe, what moves, breathes and blinks. Know this which is all that has form and all that is formless, which is to be sought after by all, which is beyond the reach of man's knowledge, and the highest of all. 2.2.1

Brahman as the Witness

Brahman is the witness **(sakshi)** of everything. The entire world, the individual beings, all living creatures, birds, and everything that breathes or moves depend on **Brahman**.

The Upanishad describes **Brahman** as both **Sat** and **Asat**.

- **Sat** (existence) refers to things that are **manifested** or have form.
- **Asat** here does not mean non-existence, but refers to that which is **unmanifest** or without form.

Another interpretation:

- **Karya** (effect, the manifested world) is **Sat**.
- **Karana** (cause, the unmanifest state) is **Asat**, also called **Avyakta** (the unmanifest).

That **Brahman** is the highest reality and is worthy of being known because it gives **Anantam** (infinite fullness).

Brahman Beyond Sense Knowledge

Brahman is beyond the knowledge obtained through the sense organs. It cannot be known as an object of perception.

The scriptures describe **Brahman** as smaller than the smallest and greater than the greatest.

This does not literally mean that Brahman is both small and big. Instead, it means **Brahman** is beyond both smallness and greatness. Small and big belong to **namarupa** (name and form). Brahman transcends all such limitations and is **Poorna Svarupa** (complete, infinite reality).

The same **Brahman**, which is the material cause **(Upadana Karana)** of everything, is the basis of breath, speech, and mind, and it is deathless.

Verse 2:

That which is radiant, subtler than the subtle, That by which all the worlds and their inhabitants are supported — That, verily, is the indestructible Brahman; That is the prana, speech and the mind; That is the True and That is the Immortal. Strike thy mind upon that which should be struck by the mind. 2.2.2

The Bow and Arrow Example

The Upanishad gives an analogy of a **bow and arrow**.

- The bow represents the **Upanishads**.
- The arrow represents the individual self **(Jeevatma)**.
- The target represents **Brahman**.

When the arrow is placed on the bow and released, it reaches the target and becomes one with it. This symbolizes **Jeeva Brahman Aikyam** (the unity of the individual and Brahman).

Although **Jeeva** and **Brahman** are never truly separate, ignorance **(avidya)** makes them appear separate.

The gap between the arrow and the target represents ignorance. Only knowledge **(jnana)** can remove this ignorance.

How Knowledge Removes Ignorance

Ignorance can only be removed by knowledge. The apparent separation between the individual and **Brahman** exists because of ignorance.

The means of gaining this knowledge is the **Upanishads**, which function as the **Pramana** (valid means of knowledge). The **Shastra** (scriptures) reveal the truth of **Brahman**.

When the proper instrument is used, knowledge arises and ignorance is removed.

Five Conditions for Reaching the Goal

For the arrow to reach the target successfully, five conditions must be satisfied:

1. **The arrow must be straight:** This represents purity of mind, achieved through living a life of **Dharma** and **Karma Yoga**.

2. **The arrow must be sharp:** Sharpness represents clarity and subtlety of mind, developed through **Upasana** and **Dhyana** (meditation).

3. **The arrow must be properly fixed to the bow:** This represents **Pramana Buddhi** (faith in the scriptures). One must approach the **Shastras** with trust and learn them systematically.

4. **The aim must be fixed on the target:** This represents **Mumukshutva** (intense desire for liberation). The goal of studying the Upanishads must be for the realization of Brahman, not any other purpose.

5. **The arrow must be drawn back and released:** This represents **Vairagya** (detachment). One must withdraw the mind from worldly distractions.

When all these conditions are fulfilled, the result is **Aikya** (unity), like the arrow merging with the target.

Verse 3:

Take the Upanishad as the bow — the great weapon and place upon it the arrow sharpened by meditation. Then, having drawn it back with a mind directed to the thought of Brahman — the Imperishable. 2.2.3

Omkara as the Name of Brahman

The Upanishad declares **Omkara (OM)** as the ideal name of **Brahman**.

Brahman is understood in two aspects:

- **Saguna Brahman** (Brahman associated with attributes and Maya)
- **Nirguna Brahman** (Brahman without attributes)

Omkara represents both aspects.

The sound **AUM** consists of three parts:

1. **A (Agara)** – represents the gross world **(Sthula Prapancham)** and the waking state **(Jagrat)**.
2. **U (Ukara)** – represents the subtle world **(Sukshma Prapancham)** and the dream state **(Swapna)**.
3. **M (Makara)** – represents the causal world **(Karana Prapancham)** and the deep sleep state **(Sushupti)**.

Beyond these three is the silence after **AUM**, which represents **Turiya**, the fourth state—pure consciousness and the true nature of **Brahman**.

Thus **OM** represents the totality of reality and is considered the most appropriate name for **Brahman**.

Verse 4:

Om is the bow; the atman is the arrow. Brahman being the goal is to be struck by an undistracted mind. Then the atman becomes one with Brahman, as the arrow with the target. 2.2.4

The World and the Self

A person without knowledge believes: “I exist in the world, and the world supports me.”

However, the **Shastras** teach the opposite: “The world exists in you.”

The **Atman** is the reality that supports and illuminates the entire world.

The world, body, and mind are superimposed on **Brahman**, just as a snake is superimposed on a rope.

The Path to Freedom from Samsara

To transcend **Samsara** (the cycle of birth and death), one must recognize the world as **Brahman**.

Meditation and inner silence become the path.

The scriptures advise avoiding unnecessary discussions about **Anatma** (non-self). Constant worldly talk strengthens **duality (Dvaita Buddhi)**.

Reducing such discussions has benefits:

- It weakens the sense of duality.
- It reduces attraction and aversion toward the world.
- It decreases identification with **Anatma**.

The **Shastras** teach that **Atman is Asanga** (unattached). Our emotional entanglements with others become the cause of **Samsara** as without the attachment one cannot give joy or sorrow. We build attachment with constant talking.

Until one attains firm knowledge, it is beneficial to limit worldly discussions and remain inwardly focused.

When true knowledge arises, silence naturally follows as the fruit of realization.

Verse 5:

In Him are woven heaven, earth, space, also the mind with all the sense-organs, prana. Know him to be the one Atman of all; abandon all other speech; He is the bridge to Immortality. 2.2.5

Atman, Mind, and Reflection of Consciousness

The **Atman** that is present everywhere appears to function through the **manas** (mind). Because the mind is constantly changing and moving from one thought to another, it seems as though the **Atman** itself is moving. Within the **heart** of the individual, this one **Atman** appears as though it is many.

The **mind** is **jada** (inert, lifeless, not conscious). It is part of the subtle body and is made from the **jada pancha bhuta** (the subtle elements of the five elements). Being inert, the mind cannot know anything by itself. It receives its ability to know through the presence of **Atman**.

When the consciousness of **Atman** is reflected in the mind, it is called **Chidabhasa** (reflected consciousness). Because of this reflection, the mind becomes capable of experiencing knowledge **(jnana)** and various mental modifications such as desire, anger, greed, and other emotions.

Because of the presence of **Chidabhasa**, many forms of knowledge or awareness arise in the mind. However, when we experience these thoughts, we usually do not distinguish between the **Atman** and the reflected consciousness.

As a result, it appears as though **Atman** itself is born with desires, anger, and other emotions, and that it also dies with them. Similarly, when thoughts arise and disappear in the mind, it appears as though **Atman** itself is coming and going.

Role of Upasana and Nididhyasana

To understand this more clearly, spiritual practice is prescribed.

In **Upasana** (devotional meditation), we usually meditate upon a **form of God,** practicing **Ishvara Nama Upasana** (meditation on the name and form of Ishvara).

However, in **Nididhyasana** (deep contemplative meditation), the approach is different. Here, we observe the thoughts that arise in the mind and recognize that they are merely thoughts appearing in the mind.

One must understand:

“This thought is appearing in the mind, but it is not the **Atman**. I am the **Atman**, which is separate from the thought.”

Ignorance and Identification with Thoughts

When a person is ignorant, the changes in the mind appear to be changes in oneself. Anger, desire, jealousy, and other emotions are mistakenly identified as part of one's true nature.

But through **Nididhyasana**, one learns to observe all the thoughts in the mind. If a person identifies with these thoughts, he begins to think:

“I am angry,”
“I am desirous,”
“I am the seer,”
“I am the enjoyer.”

In reality, all these are merely thoughts occurring in the mind. The true **Atman** remains separate from them.

With proper knowledge, one understands:

“The thoughts are separate from me. I am different from the thoughts. I am the witness of them.”

The Heart and the Network of Nadis

The **Upanishad** describes the **heart** as the place where the **nadis** (subtle energy channels) meet. These **nadis** are said to be connected to the heart like the spokes of a wheel connected to its hub.

Within the **manas** (mind) located in the heart, one must recognize the presence of **Atman**.

Using the example of a wheel, the Upanishad explains that just as the center of a wheel holds all the spokes together, similarly the center of the heart holds all the nadis together. In that **manas**, one must understand that **Atman** is present.

In the mind, countless thoughts arise and disappear. Because these thoughts appear in the mind, it may seem as though **Atman** itself is appearing along with them.

However, in reality, **Atman** is only the witness **(sakshi)** of these thoughts. It does not participate in them and remains unaffected by them.

Recognizing this truth—that **Atman** is the witness and separate from the thoughts of the mind—is the essence of **Nididhyasana** (deep contemplative meditation).

Difficulty of the Spiritual Path

The spiritual path is not easy. The seeker constantly faces distractions and inner challenges that attempt to divert the mind away from this knowledge.

Because of this, the Guru blesses the student and wishes him success on this difficult path toward realization

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Verse 6:

He moves about, becoming manifold, within the heart, where the nerves meet, like the spokes fastened in the nave of a chariot wheel. Meditate on Atman as Om. May there be no obstacle for you to cross beyond the sea of darkness! 2.2.6

Characteristics of Ishvara.

Ishvara is described as **Sarvajna** and **Sarvavit**. Although both terms mean “knower of everything,” they have slightly different meanings.

- **Sarvajna** refers to **samanya jnana** (general knowledge). This is the knowledge that belongs to the intelligent cause (**nimitta karana**) of creation.

- **Sarvavit** refers to **vishesha jnana** (particular or specific knowledge). This is the knowledge that belongs to the material cause (**upadana karana**) of creation.

For example, **Sarvajna** means knowing in general that all pots are made of clay. **Sarvavit** means knowing each individual pot in detail.

Ishvara possesses both types of knowledge: the general knowledge of the entire creation and the specific knowledge of every individual within it.

All the glory in this world belongs to **Ishvara**. The **Atman**, which is **Brahman**, is seated in the mind, in the supreme space of the heart.

Brahman, the Atman.

Because of the thoughts that arise in the mind, **Brahman** is known. The mind **(manas)** itself is **jada** (inert, non-conscious). However, because **consciousness** is reflected in the mind, thoughts arise within it. Through these thoughts, we are able to understand and experience the external world, in which the atma appears to have taken several forms **(namarupa**)

Using this same mind, one must also understand that one's true nature is **Brahman**, the **Atman**.

The subtle body is sometimes referred to here as **prana** (vital force), because **prana** is the most active and essential function within the subtle body and it never rests. The **Atman** is the **jnana chaitanyam** (pure consciousness) that illuminates the subtle body, while everything else in the subtle body is **jada** (inert).

Only because of the presence of **Atman** does everything function. Without the **Atman**, neither the mind nor the senses could operate.

Within the gross body, there exists the mind, and within that mind **Brahman** is present as the inner reality. However, this truth can only be recognized by the wise.

Those who have obtained the necessary qualifications **(adhikaritva)**, approached a **Guru**, and understood the teachings about **Supreme Brahman** are able to recognize this truth.

Through their own effort and spiritual discipline, they develop **sama** (control of the mind) and **dama** (control of the senses). In such a purified mind, they perceive the **Atma svaroopa** (true nature of the Self) as the inner form **(antar rupa)** that is self-illuminating.

Verse 7:

This Atman who knows all and all of everything and to whom belongs all the glory in the world — He, Atman, is placed in the space in the effulgent abode of Brahman. He assumes the forms of the mind and leads the body and the senses. He dwells in the body, inside the

heart. The discerning people see Him By the knowledge of That which shines as the blissful and immortal Atman. 2.2.7

Jnana Phala (The Result of Knowledge)

The **Upanishad** now explains the **jnana phala** (the fruit of knowledge). The purpose or benefit of **moksha** is described in three ways:

1. It unties the knot in the heart.
2. All doubts perish.
3. All karma is destroyed.

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1. Untying the Knot in the Heart

When knowledge **(jnana)** arises, it removes ignorance **(avidya)**. When ignorance is removed, all desires disappear.

As long as a desire exists in the mind, there will always be a longing to fulfill it. A desire usually leaves only after the object of desire is experienced. Until then, the desire remains in the mind.

No one actually wants to keep desires in the mind. That is why people try to fulfill their desires quickly, believing that attaining the desired object will remove the longing.

However, the **Shastras** explain that desires cannot be eliminated this way. When one desire is fulfilled, another desire arises. Thus the cycle of desire continues endlessly.

In reality, nobody desires desire itself; what people truly want is to be free from desire.

The scriptures teach that **jnana phala** (the result of knowledge) alone can remove all desires. When true knowledge arises, a person understands that all worldly objects are temporary and incapable of giving lasting fulfillment. Because of this understanding, the desires naturally leave the mind.

Even though many objects exist in the world, not all of them create desire in us. Similarly, when knowledge arises, desires no longer bind the individual. One does not need to forcibly remove them—the knowledge itself removes them naturally.

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2. All Doubts Perish

The **vijnanamaya kosha** (the intellect sheath) is the seat of questions, curiosity, and doubts.

Before knowledge arises, the intellect is constantly searching and questioning. However, when true knowledge of **Brahman** is gained, the intellect attains complete fulfillment and contentment.

Once this understanding arises, all doubts about the **Shastras**, **Ishvara**, **Jeevatma**, and the nature of reality disappear.

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3. Destruction of All Karma

Knowledge destroys the accumulated karmas of the individual.

There are three types of **karma**:

1. **Sanchita Karma** – accumulated karma from many past lives.
2. **Prarabdha Karma** – the portion of accumulated past-life actions (Sanchita karma) that is destined to be experienced in the present lifetime.
3. **Agami Karma** – new karma generated through present actions.

When knowledge arises:

- **Sanchita Karma** is destroyed.
- **Agami Karma** no longer binds the person.

However, **Prarabdha Karma** continues until it is exhausted. Because of this, the realized person continues to live in the body for some time.

During this period, the person lives as a **Jivanmukta** (one who is liberated while living), with inner contentment and peace.

When the **Prarabdha Karma** is fully exhausted, the person leaves the body and attains **Videha Mukti** (liberation beyond the body).

Our birth itself is the result of **karma phala** (the fruits of past actions). When the results of actions are destroyed, there is no reason for another birth.

A realized person also experiences **Prarabdha Karma**, but is not bound by it.

Realization of Brahman

When one realizes **Brahman** both as:

- **Nirguna Brahman** (Brahman without attributes), and

- **Saguna Brahman** (Brahman associated with **Maya** and therefore appearing with attributes),

the knot in the heart is untied, doubts disappear, and karma loses its binding power.

Nature of Brahman

The Upanishad describes **Brahman** as the Supreme Reality hidden within the heart. It is superior because it hides within the body, yet remains untouched by it.

Brahman is:

- Pure and free from all impurities.
- Not affected by the impurities of the body.
- Not affected by the impurities of the mind, such as **raga** and **dvesha** (attachment and aversion).
- Not affected by the ignorance of the intellect.

Even though **Brahman** is present within the body, it remains completely uncontaminated.

Brahman is **Nishkalam** (without parts) and therefore **Poorna** (complete and whole).

This pure **Brahman**, which is the **Atman**, is the illumination behind all knowledge and experience.

Those who understand this truth realize the **Aikya** (oneness) of **Atman** and **Brahman**.

Verse 8:

When He that is both high and low is seen, The fetters of the heart are broken, all doubts are resolved; and all his karma is consumed. 2.2.8

Verse 9:

The stainless indivisible Brahman, the pure, the light of all lights is in the innermost golden sheath. That is what the knowers of the Atman know. 2.2.9

Knowledge and the Instrument of Knowledge (Pramana)

To attain any knowledge, one must use the proper instrument through which that knowledge can be obtained. Knowledge does not arise on its own; it is gained through the use of the appropriate means. The instrument used to attain knowledge is called **Pramana** (valid instrument of knowledge).

All the knowledge we gain about the external world comes through our sense organs. For example, we see objects through the eyes, hear sounds through the ears, and perceive the world through these instruments.

However, the **Shastras** explain that **Brahman Jnana** (knowledge of Brahman) cannot be obtained through the sense organs. The senses that reveal objects in the world cannot reveal **Brahman**.

How Can We Know Brahman Exists?

If Brahman cannot be known through the senses, a question arises: **How can we be certain that Brahman exists?**

The **Shastras** explain that **Brahman** is the very reason why the instruments of knowledge operate. Our eyes, ears, and other sense organs function only because of the presence of **Brahman** behind them.

This is indicated by the word **Jyothi** (illumination or light). It means that **Brahman** illuminates the instruments of knowledge, such as the eyes and ears, enabling them to function.

For example:

- The **sun** acts as an external instrument of illumination. Because of sunlight, our **eyes** are able to see objects.
- Similarly, the **moon** also provides light that allows perception.

Thus, instruments require illumination in order to function.

The Role of the Mind

We also know that knowledge is obtained through the mind **(Manas)**. The mind receives information from the sense organs and forms thoughts about the objects we perceive.

Up to this point, these ideas can be understood through reasoning. But beyond this, the **Shastras** guide us further.

The **Shastras** explain that the mind arises from the subtle elements **(Tanmatras)**, which are derived from the five subtle elements before the process of **Panchikarana** (the mixing of elements that produces the gross world).

Because the subtle elements are **jada svarupa** (inert in nature), the mind and the sense organs, which arise from them, are also **jada** (inert and unconscious).

This leads to an important question:
If the mind and senses are inert, how can they gain knowledge?

Illumination by Atman

The mind becomes capable of knowing because it is illuminated by the consciousness of **Atman**. When the **cit** (pure consciousness) of **Atman** reflects in the mind, the mind appears to become conscious.

This reflection of consciousness allows the mind to function as an instrument of knowledge.

Then another question arises: **Where does the Atman get its illumination from?**

The **Shastras** declare that **Atman** is **Swayam Jyothi** (self-luminous). It does not need another light to reveal it.

When **Atman** is reflected in the mind, both the **mind** and the sense organs become illumined. Because of this illumination, they function as **Pramana** (instruments of knowledge).

Three Factors in Knowledge

In any act of knowing, three factors are present:

1. The Object – that which is known.
2. The Instrument (**Pramana**) – the means through which it is known.
3. The **Atman** – the consciousness that illumines the entire process.

The instruments reveal the objects, but they cannot reveal **Atman**, because the instruments are revealed by **Atman**.

Atman as the Ultimate Light

The **Atman**, which is not different from **Brahman**, cannot be revealed by the sun, moon, or stars. These lights illuminate objects in the world, but they cannot illuminate the **Atman**.

Rather, it is because of **Atman** that everything else becomes known.

All knowledge arises because of **Atman**. Therefore, **Atman** is the **Pramana** for all **Pramanas**—the ultimate basis that makes all instruments of knowledge function.

- To see objects, the sense organs are the instruments.
- To interpret what the senses perceive, the mind is the instrument.
- For the mind itself, the witness is the consciousness of **Atman**.

Self-Luminous Reality

Only one reality is truly **Swayam Jyothi** (self-luminous), and that is **Atman**.

Because of the presence of this self-luminous **Atman**, the mind and senses gain the ability to function as instruments of knowledge.

This **Atman** is none other than **Brahman Svarupa** (the true nature of Brahman).

Verse 10:

The sun does not shine there, nor the moon and the stars, nor these lightning, not the fire. When He shines, everything shines after Him. All this is illumined by his radiance. 2.2.10

Relationship Between Jeevatma, Brahman, and the World

The **Upanishads** declare that **Jeevatma** (the individual self) and **Paramatma** (the Supreme Self) are one and the same. This identity is called **Aikyam** (oneness). The scriptures clearly establish that **Atman** and **Brahman** are identical.

After establishing this **Aikyam**, the Upanishad proceeds to explain the relationship between the world and **Brahman**.

Here the Upanishad does not say that the world and Brahman are identical in the same way as Jeeva and Brahman. Instead, it explains that the world is **Mithya** (dependent reality, not absolutely real).

Sometimes we say that the world is **Brahman Svarupa**, which is also correct in a certain sense. However, the world appears because of **Maya**, which is dependent on **Ishvara**.

The existence **(Sat)** of **Maya** comes from **Ishvara**. The **Namarupa** (name and form) of this world is what we call **Maya**. Therefore, the scriptures negate the independent reality of the world.

How the Upanishad Negates the World

The **Upanishad** states:

“Idam Vishvam Brahman”
(This entire universe is Brahman.)

At first glance, this statement may appear to declare **Aikyam** (oneness), but its intention is actually negation of the world as an independent reality.

Example: The Post in the Dark

Consider a situation where a person sees a **signpost** in the dark and mistakes it for a human figure. From a distance it appears to be a person.

But when he goes closer, he realizes that it is actually only a post.

What seemed to be a person was never a person at all—it was always a post.

Similarly, what we perceive as the world is not truly the world as an independent reality. In reality, it is **Brahman** alone.

Thus the Upanishad teaches:

“What you see as the world is actually **Brahman**.”

Example: Clay and Pot

Another example used in Vedanta is the relationship between clay and pot.

A pot is nothing but clay in a particular form. In truth:

- There is no pot separate from clay.
- The pot is only a name and form of clay.

Similarly:

- The world is **Namarupa**.
- The **Sat** (existence) underlying it is **Brahman**.

Because **Brahman** exists, the world appears to exist. If **Brahman** were not there, the world would not exist.

However, **Brahman** can exist without the world, but the world cannot exist without **Brahman**.

Thus the world is only **Namarupa**, while the underlying **Sat** is **Brahman**.

Removing Worldly Notions

Through this teaching, the Upanishad removes the **jagat-buddhi** (the notion that the world exists independently).

It removes the idea that there is something other than **Brahman**.

The conclusion is:

There is only Brahman.

Two Types of Relationships

The Upanishad explains two relationships:

1. **Jeeva – Brahman Relationship:** This is **Aikyam** (oneness).

2. **World – Brahman Relationship:** This is **Satya–Mithya** relationship.
   Brahman is **Satya** (absolute reality), and the world is **Mithya** (dependent reality).

Nature of Brahman

Brahman is declared as **Amritam** (immortal, eternal). It always exists and never undergoes destruction.

Everything is Brahman.

- That which is in front of us is Brahman.
- That which is beyond us is Brahman.
- Everywhere there is only Brahman.

There is nothing other than Brahman.

The world, which appears as **Mithya Svarupa** (dependent appearance), is ultimately **Brahman Svarupa**.

Verse 11:

That immortal Brahman alone is before, behind, is there to the right and left. Brahman alone pervades everything above and below; this universe is that Supreme Brahman alone. 2.2.11

Mundaka 3

Kandaka 1

Chapter 3 – Part 1

Main Topics of This Chapter

In this chapter, three main topics are discussed:

1. **Sadhana** – especially **Nididhyasana** (deep contemplative meditation).
2. **Jnana Phalam** – the fruits of knowledge.
3. **Aikyam** – the oneness of the individual self and **Brahman**.

The Metaphor of the Two Birds

This section begins with a famous metaphor from the **Upanishad** describing two birds sitting on the same tree.

- The tree represents the body.
- The two birds represent the **Jeevatma** (individual self) and **Paramatma** (Supreme Self).

One of the birds is eating the fruits of the tree, while the other bird simply watches without eating.

The bird that eats the fruits represents the **Jeevatma**. The fruits symbolize **karma phala** (the results of actions). By “eating the fruits,” it means the Jeeva experiences **sukham and dukham** (pleasure and pain).

The bird that does not eat the fruits represents the **Paramatma**, who remains only as the **sakshi** (witness).

The one who experiences the fruits is the **samsari** (the one bound by samsara), while the witness remains free from samsara.

The Two Birds are Friends

The Upanishad describes the two birds as beautiful birds that are always together and are friends.

Although two birds are mentioned, this teaching still belongs to **Advaita Vedanta** (non-dual philosophy). The two birds do not represent two independent realities.

One is real and the other is only a reflection.

A common example is the sun and its reflection in water. The reflection appears like a second sun, but in reality there is only one sun.

Similarly:

- The **Paramatma** is **Jnana Swaroopa** (pure consciousness).
- The reflection of this consciousness in the mind **(manas)** is called **Chidabhasa** (reflected consciousness).

This mind together with reflected consciousness appears as the **Jeevatma**.

Just as a person and their reflection cannot be separated, **Paramatma** and **Jeevatma** cannot truly be separated. The **Jeevatma** is dependent on the **Paramatma**.

Therefore, we should not misunderstand the metaphor of the two birds as indicating duality. It is **Advaita**.

One bird is **Satya** (real), and the other is **Mithya** (dependent appearance).

Difference in Experience

Even though they are essentially the same, their apparent roles are different. The **Jeevatma** is the **samsari**. It eats the fruits of the tree and is fully immersed in experiencing the results of its actions.

The fruits represent **karma phala**, which includes both **joy and sorrow**.

The **Paramatma**, however, does not experience these fruits. It remains as the witness.

It does not act and does not experience the results of actions.

Thus:

- The **Jeevatma** is the **karta** (doer) and **bhokta** (experiencer).
- The **Paramatma** is neither **karta** nor **bhokta**; it is only the witness.

The cause of **samsara** is this sense of doership and enjoyership.

Condition of the Jeevatma

The **Jeevatma** becomes deeply identified with the body **(sharira)**. The body is constantly changing, just like the tree in the metaphor.

Just as birds fly from place to place but temporarily rest on a tree, the individual soul travels through different worlds but stays in a body to experience the results of its actions.

Only through a body can one experience **karma phala**, both **punya** (merit) and **papa** (demerit).

This is why the cycle of **samsara** continues.

Why Does the Individual Suffer?

The individual soul suffers because of this identification with the body and the world.

But an important question arises: **Do people choose suffering, or does suffering come to them helplessly?**

The **Upanishad** says that not even fools choose sorrow deliberately. Sorrow appears helplessly in one's life.

Another reason for suffering is delusion (moha).

Delusion occurs when we give more value to something than it truly deserves. We attach excessive importance to worldly objects.

Correct Understanding Through Vedanta

When we study **Vedanta**, we learn to value things correctly.

What is the true value of the world?

The world is only **Namarupa** (name and form) and is **Mithya** (dependent and impermanent).

We expect permanent happiness from something that is impermanent, because of our delusion (moha).

For example, consider a mirage in the desert. It may look like water from a distance.

How much value should we give it?

We can appreciate its appearance, but if we expect it to quench our thirst, that is delusion.

Similarly, if we think the world is absolute reality **(Sat)** and expect permanent fulfillment from it, that is **samsara**.

This leads to **shoka** (sorrow).

Freedom from Sorrow

When does the individual become free from **shoka**?

Freedom arises when the Jeeva turns toward the other bird, the Ishvara, and recognizes its true nature.

The individual begins to see **Ishvara** as the higher reality, worthy of reverence.

Eventually, the seeker understands something deeper:

Ishvara is not different from oneself.

When the Jeeva recognizes Ishvara as its own true nature, and understands that this reality is **asamsari** (free from samsara) and the witness of everything, liberation occurs.

At that moment, the individual realizes the **Aikyam** (oneness) of **Jeeva and Brahman**.

Once **moksha** is attained, there is no more suffering.

Verse 1:

Two birds, united always and known by the same name, perch on the same tree. One of them eats the delicious fruit; the other looks on without eating. 3.1.1

Verse 2:

Seated on the same tree, the jiva— grieves owing to helplessness. But when he beholds the other, the Lord worshipped by all and His glory, he then becomes free from grief. 3.1.2

Understanding the Nature of Brahman

The one who clearly understands right and wrong, and who sees the true relationship between the **Jeeva** and **Brahman**, comes to recognize the **Brahma-tattva** (the truth of Brahman).

How does such a person understand Brahman?

He understands that **Brahman** is **Jnana-svarupa**—pure consciousness. This knowledge or awareness is always present. It is self-revealing, called **Swayam-jyoti** (self-luminous).

The **Atma-chaitanya** (consciousness of the Self) is present at all times:

- in the waking state,
- in the dream state, and
- even in deep sleep.

Because it is always present, it is recognized as our true nature.

Brahman as the Cause of the World

The seeker also understands **Brahman** as the cause of the universe.

He recognizes **Ishvara**, the Lord of the universe, as the one who has manifested the world. The world exists because of **Brahman**, with **Maya** functioning as the **Upadana karana** (material cause).

Thus the seeker understands **Brahman** in two ways:

1. As the absolute reality (The Supreme Reality).
2. As **Ishvara**, the cause of the universe, associated with **Maya**.

In another way of explanation, **Ishvara** is also described as the cause of four-faced **Brahma**, the first created being.

When this knowledge arises, the seeker transcends both **punya** (merit) and **papa** (sin). At that stage, he realizes **Advaita**—the non-dual truth.

The Fruit of This Knowledge

The fruit of this knowledge is liberation from **samsara**. Such a person does not return to the cycle of birth and death.

While living in the body, he is called a **Jivanmukta** (one who is liberated while alive). After the body falls, he abides completely in **Brahman**, attaining **Videha Mukti**.

Why Both Punya and Papa Must Be Transcended

Most of us can understand why sins must be transcended. But it is hard to understand even puniya (merits from good deed) should be

Why must both punya and papa be given up?

According to the **Shastras**, both are ultimately products of ignorance (**Avidya**).

Both arise because we identify ourselves with the body **(sharira)** and act with **abhimana** (ego-identification).

Before coming to **Vedanta**, most people pursue **punya** as their primary goal.

But **Vedanta** teaches that even **punya** must eventually be transcended.

Traditionally, the goals of life are described as:

- **Dharma**
- **Artha**
- **Kama**

Here **dharma** generates **punya**.

What does punya give?

It brings pleasant experiences, favorable objects, and comfortable circumstances.

However, even that is a problem. If life becomes filled only with comfort and pleasure, one may forget God and forget the Self.

Even sorrow makes a person turn toward spiritual inquiry, but continuous pleasure may keep the mind absorbed in the world.

Thus **punya** brings **sukha** (pleasure), and pleasure distracts the mind from the pursuit of the **Atman**.

For this reason, from the standpoint of **Vedanta**:

- **Papa** obstructs liberation because it brings suffering and agitation.
- **Punya** also obstructs liberation because it binds one to pleasant experiences and worldly enjoyment.

Verse 3:

When the seer beholds the self-luminous Creator, the Lord, the Purusha, the progenitor of Brahma, then the knower, shakes off good and evil, becomes stainless and reaches the supreme unity. 3.1.3

The Mental State of the Wise – The Fruit of Knowledge

The **Upanishad** now describes the mental state of the wise **(Jnani)**, which is the **jnana phala** (fruit of knowledge).

The wise, who understands that **Brahman** alone appears in different forms, sees everything as Brahman.

Because of this understanding, the wise person naturally speaks very little and often abides in silence. For him, there is no longer any subject that needs to be discussed or argued about.

This silence is not a practice for him but is the natural state of being which he has attained as a result of knowledge.

Sadhana Before and After Knowledge

The **Upanishads** prescribe various **sadhanas** (spiritual practices) for seekers before knowledge arises. Some practices are meant to prepare the mind, while others must be given up once knowledge is attained.

For example:

- **Karma Yoga**
- **Upasana** (devotional meditation)

These practices are necessary during the stage of preparation, but once **jnana** arises, they are no longer required as disciplines.

However, certain qualities must become one's nature. These include:

- **Sama** (mastery of the mind)
- **Dama** (control of the senses)
- Silence and inner quietness

Initially these are practiced as **sadhana**, but gradually they become **svabhava** (one's natural state).

Freedom from Argument and Dependence

The wise leave behind all arguments and debates. He has nothing to prove and nothing to defend.

He is content within himself and does not seek happiness in the external world. Because his fulfillment comes from the Self, he does not search for pleasure in objects or circumstances.

Actions of the Wise

After attaining knowledge, what actions does the wise perform?

The wise are not bound to perform ritualistic duties such as **Agnihotra** and other **Vedic karmas**.

His activities mainly revolve around:

- abiding in the knowledge of the Self,
- contemplation or meditation,
- maintaining dispassion **(vairagya)**.

Since he is already fulfilled within himself, he does not act for personal gain or happiness.

However, the wise may still engage in actions for the welfare of the world. Such actions arise naturally, not for personal benefit, but out of compassion for others.

Stability in Knowledge

The one who stands still in the knowledge of the **Atman** is considered superior even among the learned.

Some people may study the **Shastras** and understand the teachings intellectually, but they may still fall back into old mental patterns. Because of this, they are not always able to remain firmly established in the knowledge they have gained.

Even after gaining knowledge, if the results are not fully experienced, it is often because of impurities remaining in the mind, such as:

- **Raga** (attachment)
- **Dvesha** (aversion)

These tendencies disturb the mind and prevent one from remaining steady in the realization of the Self.

When these impurities are removed, the knowledge shines fully and the person remains firmly established in **Brahman**.

Verse 4:

He indeed is Prana, shining variously within all living beings. The wise man who knows Him does not talk. Revelling in the Self, delighting in the Self, performing actions, he is the foremost among the knowers of Brahman. 3.1.4

Spiritual Practices Prescribed by the Upanishad

The next topic discussed is about spiritual practices.

Some practices are external (outward actions) and some are internal (mental disciplines). The Upanishad prescribes four important disciplines for a seeker.

They are:

1. **Satyam** (truthfulness)
2. **Tapas** (discipline or austerity)
3. **Samyak Jnana** (right understanding through proper study)
4. **Brahmacharya** (a disciplined and restrained life)

These **Upanishads** not only teach what one must do, but also what one must avoid.

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1. Satyam – Truthfulness

One must not speak lies.

Truthfulness is a fundamental discipline in spiritual life. Sometimes a person may speak in a way that protects another person from harm, but one must never lie for personal gain or selfish advantage.

The Upanishads emphasize that truth alone ultimately triumphs.

A seeker must develop strong faith that truth always leads to spiritual victory.

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2. Tapas – Discipline

Here Tapas refers mainly to inner discipline, especially:

- **Sama** – control and calmness of the mind
- **Dama** – control of the senses

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3. Samyak Jnana – Proper Understanding

This means listening to the teachings of the Shastras with faith and attention until their true meaning is clearly understood.

This involves the traditional process of:

- **Shravana** – listening to the teachings
- **Manana** – reflecting on them
- **Nididhyasana** – deep contemplation

Through this process the seeker gains the right understanding of **Brahman**.

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4. Brahmacharya

Brahmacharya refers to a life of discipline, self-control, and moderation.

Traditionally it also includes celibacy during the stage of learning, but more broadly it means living a life that conserves physical and mental energy and directs it toward spiritual pursuit.

Purpose of These Practices

These disciplines are prescribed to develop qualifications for **Brahma Jnana**.

They help remove the impurities and shortcomings of the **Antahkarana** (the inner instrument consisting of mind, intellect, memory, and ego).

If someone studies the **Shastras** but still does not attain liberation, it indicates that the mind has not yet become sufficiently pure.

Therefore, these practices are essential to prepare the mind for the knowledge of **Brahman**.

Importance of Truth

The **Upanishads** declare that truth alone leads to victory.

A person who firmly lives by the value of **Satyam** develops a pure and healthy mind, which becomes capable of realizing the highest truth right while he is alive and lives as a **Jivan Muktan** here in this abode.

Through following the practice of truthfulness if he is not liberated here, Upanishads says not just does a seeker grow spiritually but also reaches **Brahma Loka** through the **Shukla Gati** (the bright spiritual path), after his death. In **Brahma Loka** one gets another chance at attaining the knowledge of **Brahman**.

Verse 5:

This Atman, resplendent and pure, can be reached by unceasing practice of truthfulness, austerity, knowledge and brahmachaya; whom the sinless sannyasins behold residing within the body. 3.1.5

Verse 6:

Truth alone wins, not falsehood; by truth, the path of the Devas is widened, that by which the seers travel on, whose every desire is satisfied, proceed to the Highest Abode of the True. 3.1.6

Nature of Brahman

The **Upanishad** describes the nature of **Brahman**.

Brahman is present everywhere. It is **Swayam Jyoti** (self-luminous). It cannot be perceived through the sense organs, nor can it be reached through mere logic or reasoning. It is subtler than the subtlest.

Although it appears through countless names and forms **(Namarupa)**, it is actually the illumining principle behind all of them.

For the ignorant, Brahman seems very far away. But for the wise, it is very near. In truth, it is present within every individual, in their body and in their intellect **(Buddhi)**.

A person comes to recognize the **Atman** in one's own **Buddhi**.

The Need for a Sukshma Buddhi

To know and realize **Brahman**, one must possess a **Sukshma Buddhi** (subtle and refined intellect) and a pure mind.

Why is a Sukshma Buddhi necessary?

Because **Brahman** cannot be understood by any other means.

- It cannot be seen by the sense organs.
- It cannot be grasped by the mind.
- It cannot be known through inference or logical reasoning.
- It cannot be attained through penance or ritual actions **(Karma)**.

It can be realized only through **Jnana (knowledge)**. This knowledge arises in the **intellect (Buddhi)**.

The intellect is the instrument through which knowledge becomes clear. Through a purified intellect, one can attain **Brahman**.

Why the Intellect Fails to Recognize the Self

The **Buddhi** naturally has the ability to recognize the **Atman**. However, due to attachments to the external world and impurities such as:

- **Raga** (attachment)
- **Dvesha** (aversion)

the intellect becomes **clouded** and loses its ability to clearly comprehend **Atma Tattva** (the truth of the Self).

Role of the Intellect

One of the main functions of the intellect is decision making.

Only when the intellect is clear and pure can it make the correct decisions.

The intellect also constantly makes decisions regarding **Anatma Vishaya** (matters related to the non-Self), such as worldly goals and pursuits.

But the true role of the Buddhi is to determine what one should truly seek in life.

It must decide the highest goal, which is liberation **(Moksha)**, and direct the person toward it.

Directing Life Toward Liberation

Once the intellect recognizes the goal of liberation, it must guide the seeker toward the proper spiritual path.

This includes:

- **Shravana** – listening to the teachings of the **Shastras**
- **Manana** – reflecting upon the teachings
- **Nididhyasana** – deep contemplation

These practices may also be supported through **Dhyana** (meditation) and **Upasana** (devotional contemplation).

Through these disciplines the mind becomes purified, and the intellect becomes subtle and steady.

Realization Through Vichara

When the mind becomes pure and the intellect becomes subtle, the seeker becomes qualified to realize **Atma Tattva**.

Such realization arises in a person who engages in sincere **Vichara** (deep inquiry into the nature of the Self).

Through this inquiry, the seeker ultimately recognizes that the **Atman** is none other than **Brahman**.

Verse 7:

That Brahman shines forth, vast, self-luminous, of unthinkable form, subtler than the subtle, farther than far and very near. Verily, He is seen here, dwelling in the cave of the heart of conscious beings. 3.1.7

Verse 8:

He is not grasped by the eye; nor by speech; nor by other senses; nor by penance; nor by karma; when one's mind is purified through serenity of intellect, then alone he sees the indivisible (Brahman) in meditation. 3.1.8

Knowing the Atman in the Mind

The **Upanishads** sometimes say that the **Atman** should be known in the mind **(Manas)**. In other places, they say that the Atman cannot be known by the mind. At first glance, this appears to be a contradiction. However, this is not truly contradictory. It requires proper understanding.

Atman as Sat Svarupa

The **Atman** is **Sat Svarupa** (the nature of pure existence) and **Chit Svarupa** (pure consciousness).

The mind itself becomes capable of awareness only because of the presence of the Atman. The mind functions because it receives consciousness from the Atman.

The mind does not independently possess **Sat** or **Chit**. These belong only to the Atman.

Because the mind receives its illuminating power from the **Atman**, it gains the capacity to function as a **pramana** (instrument of knowledge).

Why the Mind is Still Necessary

If the **Atman** already illuminates the mind, then why is the mind needed at all in spiritual inquiry?

The answer lies in the problem of superimposition.

Upon the **Atman**, we have wrongly projected the **Pancha Kosha** (five sheaths):

- **Annamaya Kosha** (physical body)
- **Pranamaya Kosha** (vital forces)
- **Manomaya Kosha** (mind)

- **Vijnanamaya Kosha** (intellect)
- **Anandamaya Kosha** (causal sheath)

Because of ignorance, we identify with these sheaths and mistakenly say “I am the body,” “I am the mind,” or “I am the intellect.”

The mind is required in order to remove these wrong identifications.

Thus, the mind is used in negating the **Anatma** (the non-Self) that has been falsely taken as the Self.

Role of the Mind in Self-Knowledge

Whenever the **Upanishads** say that the mind is required, it means that the mind is needed to remove the mistaken identification with **Anatma**.

This includes things such as:

- **Prana**
- **Manas** (mind)
- **Buddhi** (intellect)
- **Sharira** (body)

The mind is not expected to reveal the Atman directly, because the Atman is already self-luminous.

Instead, the mind removes the ignorance and false identification, allowing the already-present **Atman** to be recognized.

Atman in the Body and Mind

The **Upanishad** also explains that the mind exists in the gross body, which is supported by the five Pranas.

Within this mind, the Atman is to be recognized.

The **Atman**, as pure **Chaitanya** (consciousness), is the principle that holds everything together.

It is this consciousness that weaves all the living beings together.

The **Chaitanya** present in all **Jivas**, along with their **Pranas**, is said to be woven together because of the presence of the **Atman**.

This means that consciousness is present everywhere, and it is the fundamental reality underlying all living beings.

Verse 9:

The Atman should be known by the mind within the body that is pervaded by five pranas. The mind in all creatures is pervaded by these pranas. When it is purified, then the Atman shines out of itself. 3.1.9

The Glory of Knowledge

This section of the **Upanishad** describes the glory of knowledge and the greatness of the wise (the realized person).

Here, the wise person is compared to **Ishvara**. It says that people can have their desires fulfilled either by approaching **Ishvara** or by approaching a liberated sage.

The **Upanishad** states that those who have desires may approach the wise in the same way they approach **Ishvara**, seeking the fulfillment of their wishes. Approaching a liberated sage can also lead to the fulfillment of desires.

Power of the Jnani's Sankalpa

If the wise person has a desire, where does he go to fulfill it?

The **Upanishad** says that for the wise, mere **Sankalpa** (mental resolve or intention) is enough to fulfill a desire.

It is said that such a wise person can attain any world or any object that he desires in his heart. If a desire arises, that **sankalpa** alone is sufficient for the attainment of the object. He does not need to perform any effort or action to achieve it.

Through **Sankalpa** alone, the result manifests.

Can Everyone Attain Things Through Sankalpa?

Can ordinary people also attain things merely through sankalpa?

The answer given by the **Vedanta** tradition is that after attaining true knowledge, personal desires themselves disappear.

The wise do not live with ordinary cravings for objects or pleasures. Therefore, the question of fulfilling personal desires through **sankalpa** usually does not arise.

When Desires Arise in the Wise

Under two circumstances, the wise person may wish for something.

1. Desire for the Welfare of Others

Sometimes the wise may wish for the well-being of others or for the benefit of society. Such intentions are not based on personal gain or enjoyment.

When such a **sankalpa** arises, it may manifest naturally without effort.

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2. Effects of Prarabdha Karma

Another possibility is that, because of **Prarabdha Karma** (the karma responsible for the present body and life), certain thoughts or desires may arise spontaneously.

These are not driven by attachment or selfish motive, and they are not considered **Adharma**.

Even in such cases, the wise person does not act out of personal craving. His actions remain detached and free from bondage.

Why are the Wise Revered

Because the **Jnani** possesses such spiritual power and purity, the **Upanishad** advises seekers to revere and honor such realized beings.

The wise person is considered highly sacred because he abides in the knowledge of **Brahman** and is therefore compared to **Ishvara**.

Verse 10:

Whatever world a man of pure understanding envisages in his mind and whatever desires he cherishes, that world he gains and those desires he obtains, Therefore, let everyone who wants prosperity worship the man who knows the Atman. 3.1.10

Mundaka 3

Kandaka 2

Chapter 3 – Part 2

Approaching the Wise

Here it is stated that even a person who does not have worldly desires may approach the wise. In particular, one who has a strong desire for liberation must approach the wise.

A **Mumukshu** is one who does not desire worldly objects. His only desire is that all other desires should leave him.

When will that desire also disappear? This desire will leave him only when he has no more desires.

Therefore, even those who are free from worldly desires should approach the wise and seek guidance. They should request instruction in **Upasana** and the study of the **Shastras**, so that all remaining desires may be removed and they may attain **Jnana**.

This must be done with faith and humility.

The Nature of Brahman Known by the Wise

What kind of Brahman Tattva has the Jnani realized?

Here the **Upanishad** explains the characteristics of **Brahman**.

The wise person knows **Para Brahman**, which is his own true nature. It is the reality upon which the entire world is projected.

He understands **Brahman** as the supreme abode of the universe. It is **Chaitanya Svarupa** (pure consciousness) and **Jnana Svarupa** (the nature of knowledge).

The wise person also understands that this supreme Brahman is completely pure.

Although the world appears within **Brahman**, the imperfections and flaws of the world do not affect or taint Brahman.

The Result of Listening to This Knowledge

Those who listen to and understand this knowledge properly, and who have removed their desires, cross over the cycle of birth and death **(Samsara)**.

Such people are not born again. They attain liberation.

Verse 1:

He, who is free from all desire, knows the Supreme Abode of Brahman, which shines brightly and in which the universe rests. Those wise men who worship such a person transcend the seed of birth. 3.2.1

What Happens to Those Who Have Not Removed Desires?

The **Upanishad** now explains what happens to those who have not removed their desires. In this discussion, two important points are emphasized:

1. The Upanishads instruct us to cross over desires.
2. They explain the results of knowledge and the consequences of desire.

The Upanishad states that desire is the cause of Samsara and also the cause of birth (Janma Karana).

When a person dies, the journey that follows is determined by their desires. The predominant desire in the mind influences the next birth.

The Cycle of Desire and Samsara

The root cause of desire is ignorance **(Avidya)**.

Ignorance leads to desire, desire leads to action (Karma), and actions lead to repeated births and deaths, which is Samsara.

A person desires objects that are either:

- seen directly, or
- heard about and imagined to give great pleasure.

Because of such desires, a person continues to assume many bodies and experiences repeated births and deaths.

How Desire Works

When a person desires something, he usually thinks only about the pleasure the object may bring. He does not think about the limitations or flaws of that object.

He focuses only on the good qualities **(Guna)** and ignores the defects **(Dosha)**.

Because of this attachment, after death he is born again with the desires in a place or situation where the desired objects are available, so that he can experience them.

Nature of Desire

Desire (**Kama**) always leads to action.

These actions may be either:

- **Dharma** (righteous action), or
- **Adharma** (unrighteous action).

Thus desire becomes the driving force behind **karma**, which in turn sustains **samsara**.

However, the seeker does not desire birth; he desires **Moksha** (liberation).

The One Who Has Removed Desire

If a person removes **Kama**, he develops dispassion **(Vairagya)**.

Through this dispassion, he becomes established in **Jnana Nishta** (firm abidance in knowledge) and attains the state of **Jivan Mukti**.

In this state, he becomes **free from all desires**.

How Are Desires Removed?

Desires are removed when a person truly understands himself. When one realizes the **Atman**, all desires fall away naturally. This is because with **Atma Jnana** the ignorance is destroyed which is the root cause of all desires.

Desire as Both Qualification and Result

Removing desires from the mind is both:

- a qualification for liberation, and
- a result of liberation.

Before realization, the seeker practices dispassion and consciously avoids objects of desire. This often feels like renunciation or sacrifice.

This stage is sometimes experienced as self-restraint or withdrawal from desired objects.

However, after liberation, desires disappear naturally and completely. At that point, the person is not suppressing desires—they simply no longer arise.

Therefore, he does not feel that he is sacrificing anything.

Removal of the Root Cause

If a person has truly removed desires, it means he has removed the root cause of all desires, which is ignorance.

When ignorance disappears, the delusion regarding objects also disappears.

In the beginning, even if a person practices renunciation, he may still feel like a renunciate who is giving up things.

But after realization, even the sense of being a renunciate disappears, because the person recognizes that the Self alone is complete.

Verse 2:

He, who longs for objects of desire, is born there and there with such desires; but of him whose desires have been fulfilled and who has realised, the Atman, the desires end here, in this world. 3.2.2

The Main Goal and Blessings

Two important topics are discussed here:

1. Self-realization as a goal, which is called **Mumukshutva** (the deep desire for liberation).

2. The blessing of **Ishvara**.

This section explains what kind of spiritual effort is necessary and also what efforts alone are not sufficient for realizing the Atman.

Importance of Mumukshutva

The teaching here emphasizes that if there is no **Mumukshutva**—the intense desire for liberation—and if the mind is not fully directed toward **Brahman** as the highest goal, then any spiritual efforts may not lead to realization.

Even if a person performs many practices, without this single-pointed desire for liberation, the knowledge of Brahman will not arise.

However, when a person has a firm and unwavering goal of liberation, and performs the necessary **sadhanas**, those efforts will eventually lead to the desired knowledge.

What Cannot Lead to Atma Jnana by Itself

The **Upanishads** say that **Atma Jnana** cannot be attained merely through these practices:

- It cannot be attained simply by chanting the Vedas.
- It cannot be attained merely by memorizing verses from the scriptures.
- It cannot be attained just by listening to the Vedas repeatedly.

These practices are valuable and necessary, but by themselves they are not enough. Without **Mumukshutva**—the intense desire for liberation even these practices which are otherwise revered in the Vedas will not yield any results.

The Atma Jnana is a Secret

The knowledge of the **Atman** is often described as a great secret.

If this knowledge is explained to someone who does not possess the right qualifications, it will remain a secret even after it has been revealed.

Although there are no flaws in the **pramanas** (instruments) and the guru, for an unprepped mind it shall stay concealed.

Role of the Spiritual Disciplines

Although the **Upanishads** and **Vedas** emphasize practices such as:

- study of the **Shastras**,
- listening to teachings,
- reflection and contemplation,

This passage reminds us that without **Mumukshutva**, these practices may not yield the desired result.

They become fruitful only when the seeker has a deep longing for liberation.

Choosing the Atman

The **Upanishad** says that the **Atman** is attained only by the one who chooses the **Atman** alone.

Such a seeker makes Self-realization the highest goal and lets go of all other lesser pursuits.

Another way that this is perceived is that the Brahman chooses who shall attain the Brahman Jnana. This means that when a person sincerely chooses the **Atman**, he also receives the blessing of **Ishvara**.

The seeker who turns toward Self-knowledge, developing dispassion toward all other worldly goals and achievements, receives the grace of **Ishvara**.

The Fruit of This Path

For such a qualified seeker, the Atman reveals itself.

The Self shines clearly in his understanding, and he recognizes the difference between:

- **Atman** (the Self), and
- **Anatma** (the non-Self).

Through this knowledge, he realizes his true nature and understands that he himself is the **Atma Svarupa**.

Verse 3:

This Atman cannot be attained through study of the Vedas, or intelligence, or by learning —whom he wishes to attain—by that it can be attained. To him this Atman reveals its true nature. 3.2.3

Three Sadhanas

Three important **sadhanas** are discussed here:

1. Mental strength
2. Earnestness
3. Renunciation

These are essential qualifications for realizing the **Atman**.

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1. Mental Strength

Practices such as adhering to truthfulness, and cultivating **sama** (control of the mind) and **dama** (control of the senses), help a person develop mental strength.

Mental strength grows when a person follows good values and disciplines.

On the other hand, emotions such as desire, anger, and greed are signs of weakness of the mind. They are like diseases of the mind.

When someone harms or troubles others, it often arises from a weak mental structure. A person's conduct reflects the condition of his mind. Such people should not be hated. Instead, we should feel compassion for them, because just as some people are physically ill, others are mentally ill.

With a weak mind, one cannot attain the knowledge of the **Atman**.

Even after gaining knowledge, one must practice **Nididhyasana** (deep contemplation) in order to become firmly established in that knowledge (**Jnana Nishta**). Without sufficient mental strength, one cannot remain steady in that realization.

A truly strong person is one who can call the world **mitya, r**egardless of whatever **Namarupa** (names and forms) appear before him.

If a person becomes attached to praise, success, or prosperity, it becomes difficult to recognize that the world is **Mithya** (dependent and not absolutely real). A strong mind is one that can see any name and form as temporary and Mithya, even when surrounded by prosperity, appreciation, and admiration.

Without this strength, the **Atman** cannot be realized.

Thus the mind must possess two kinds of strength:

- **Adherence to good values and discipline**
- The **ability to recognize the world as Mithya.**

To clearly understand the world as **Mithya**, one needs inner strength, which is developed through **Nididhyasana**.

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2. Earnestness

A seeker must remain attentive and alert at all times regarding the objects and situations around him.

If people around us constantly praise us, admire us, or respect us, or if we easily obtain objects that we desire, our attention may slowly shift away from our spiritual goal, sometimes without us even realizing it.

In such situations, dispassion **(Vairagya)** may gradually weaken if the external world begins to appear more meaningful or attractive.

If such negligence or distraction occurs, it becomes difficult to attain the knowledge of the Atman.

Therefore, the seeker must maintain earnestness and vigilance on the path.

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3. Renunciation

Without renunciation, the Atman cannot be realized. Developing these qualities may take time, but they must be patiently cultivated.

When a seeker sincerely practices these sadhanas and makes consistent effort to realize Brahman, he will eventually attain it.

Otherwise, without these qualifications, a person continues to remain bound in Samsara.

Verse 4:

This Atman cannot be attained by one devoid of strength or earnestness or by knowledge accompanied by renunciation. But of the knower who strives with these aids, the Atman enters into the Brahman. 3.2.4

Contentment of the Wise

The wise who has attained the knowledge of **Brahman** also gains complete contentment from that knowledge.

In general, when we gain knowledge about any object in the world, it usually leads to desire or sometimes aversion toward that object. Knowledge of worldly things often creates a tendency either to possess them or avoid them.

However, when one gains the knowledge of the **Atman**, the result is entirely different. Instead of creating new desires, it removes all desires. The knower of the Atman becomes completely content.

In the world, most forms of knowledge lead to desire, and desire leads to action. But the one who realizes the Atman becomes fulfilled because he has accomplished what truly needed to be accomplished. For him, nothing else remains to be attained.

Although such a person has attained everything that is to be attained, he continues to live due to **Prarabdha Karma**.

Prarabdha Karma refers to the portion of past karma that has already begun to bear fruit and has produced the present body and life circumstances. Even after attaining **Self-knowledge**, the effects of **Prarabdha Karma** continue until the body naturally falls. Therefore, the wise person continues to live and function in the world until the Prarabdha karma is exhausted.

In the mind of the wise, all desires, along with impurities such as greed, anger, and attachment, are completely removed. Because of this knowledge, he abides in a state of deep contentment.

His sense organs also become calm and quiet.

For example, when a person is hungry, his mouth constantly seeks food to satisfy that hunger. Similarly, in **Samsara**, the five sense organs constantly search for pleasure from objects in the external world.

For the wise person, however, the senses become calm because he has attained inner fulfillment through knowledge. His senses continue to function only for transactions in the world, not for gaining satisfaction or pleasure.

His senses are no longer outward-seeking in search of fulfillment.

Such wise beings, while living, see the entire world as non-different from themselves.

When their body falls, they are understood to be **Brahma-Svarupa** alone.

Thus, while living they are called **Jivanmukta** (liberated while alive), and after the fall of the body they are referred to as **Videhamukta**.

Verse 5:

Having realized Atman, the seers become satisfied with their Knowledge, their purpose accomplished, they are free from passions with a tranquil mind. Such calm souls ever devoted to the Self, behold the omnipresent Brahman everywhere and in the end enter into It. 3.2.5

How the Wise Attain Knowledge

The **Upanishad** says that they attained it through **Sannyasa Yoga**.

Here **Sannyasa Yoga** essentially refers to **Jnana Yoga**. If we interpret **Sannyasa** merely as the formal **Sannyasa Ashrama** (the monastic stage of life), we must ask why this stage is prescribed in the **Shastras**. The answer is that **Sannyasa Ashrama** is primarily meant to support the pursuit of **Jnana Yoga**.

Therefore, if someone takes **Sannyasa** but does not pursue **Jnana Yoga**, that renunciation becomes meaningless for him. The real purpose of **Sannyasa** is to dedicate oneself to the pursuit of **Self-knowledge**.

Through this path, the wise purified their minds and attained knowledge.

Purification of the Mind

The mind can be purified in two main ways:

1. Removal of Attachment and Aversion

This is achieved through **Karma Yoga**.

By performing one's duties without selfish expectation, the mind gradually becomes free from **raga** (attachment) and **dvesha** (aversion).

2. Removal of Ignorance

This is accomplished through knowledge obtained through **Jnana Yoga**.

Thus the purity of the mind is attained through:

- **Karma Yoga**
- **Jnana Yoga**
- **Sannyasa**

Attainment of Brahman

After purifying the mind, what did the wise attain?

They attained **Atman**, the **Supreme Brahman**.

After studying the **Upanishads** and purifying their minds through **Sannyasa Yoga**, they realized the **Supreme Brahman** that the Upanishads reveal.

Thus they became **Mukta** (liberated).

While living, they become established in the indestructible nature of **Brahman** and cross over the fear of death.

When their body falls, they become **Videha Mukta**.

Videha Mukti

Videha Mukti means liberation after the fall of the body.

When the body falls, the wise person merges with **Brahman** completely.

For such a realized person, that death becomes the last death, because he is not born again.

The Three Types of Karma

To understand this, we must understand the three types of **karma**:

1. Sanchita Karma

This is the **total accumulated karma** from all past lifetimes.

It is like a vast storehouse of actions and their results waiting to fructify.

2. Prarabdha Karma

From the accumulated **Sanchita Karma**, a small portion begins to fructify and produces the present body and life circumstances. This portion is called **Prarabdha Karma**.

It determines:

- One's birth
- One's body
- Life circumstances

This karma must be experienced and cannot be avoided once it begins.

3. Agami Karma

While experiencing **Prarabdha Karma** in this life, a person performs new actions.

These new actions generate **Agami Karma**, which will bear fruit in the future.

This **Agami Karma** later joins the storehouse of **Sanchita Karma**.

Thus the cycle continues for an ignorant person.

Karma and the Wise Person

For the wise person who has realized **Brahman**:

- **Sanchita Karma** is destroyed by knowledge.
- **Agami Karma** does not accumulate because the wise person no longer identifies as the doer.
- Only **Prarabdha Karma** remains until the body falls.

Thus the **Prarabdha Karma** continues until it exhausts itself, allowing the body to live until its destined end.

What is Death?

Death is simply the destruction of the gross body.

The mind (which is part of the subtle body) is not destroyed at death.

For an ignorant person, the subtle body carries merit **(punya)** and demerit **(papa)** and takes another birth according to those karmas.

The gross body, made of the five elements **(Pancha Bhutas)**, returns to those elements after death.

The subtle body, made of 19 components, continues and takes another gross body based on karma.

Thus the cycle of **Samsara** continues for the ignorant.

Path of the Wise After Death

For the wise person who has realized **Brahman**:

- The gross body and subtle body continue temporarily because of **Prarabdha Karma**.
- However, **Sanchita Karma** and **Agami Karma** are destroyed.

Why? Because both **Sanchita** and **Agami Karma** depend on **Ahamkara** (ego). The wise person has destroyed **Ahamkara** through the knowledge of **Brahman**. Therefore, no new karmas arise, and no accumulated karmas remain.

Dissolution of the Bodies

When the wise person dies:

- The gross body merges with the five gross elements.
- The subtle body dissolves into the subtle elements. The various powers (**shakthi**) of the subtle body return to their respective cosmic deities (**Devatas**).

Thus all **Anatmas** (non-Self components) dissolve into their respective sources.

The realized person remains only as pure **Atman**.

The Sixteen Anatmas

It is said that a **Jiva** possesses sixteen Anatma components.

After death, these components dissolve into their respective cosmic totalities **(Samasti)**. Beyond these sixteen is the **Brahman** principle.

The realized person remains established in that **Brahman** alone.

Why the Verse Mentions Fifteen

In some verses, only fifteen Anatmas are mentioned.

This is explained by saying that when a wise person passes away, his name and fame continue to remain in the world, especially through his students and followers.

Thus his name lives on, even though all other components dissolve.

Verse 6:

Having well ascertained the Self, the goal of the Vedantic knowledge and having purified their minds through the practice of sannyasa and yoga, the seers, attain Immortality and when their bodies fall, attain the worlds of the Brahman. 3.2.6

Verse 7:

The fifteen parts go back to their source, and all the senses to their deities; and all his karma and the atman, all these become one, in the highest and imperishable Brahman. 3.2.7

Merging with Brahman

Just as different rivers, upon reaching the ocean, merge into one, and we can no longer distinguish one river from another, in the same way, the realized person becomes free from **Nama Rupa** (name and form) and attains the **Paramatma**.

Dropping Name and Form

For one who has attained liberation while living (**Jivanmukti**), all identification with **Nama** Rupa is given up.

When our vision is focused on pots, we see many differences—each pot has a different name and form. But when our attention shifts to the clay, all pots are understood to be the same in essence.

Similarly, in this world, names and forms distract us from Brahman.

- When we focus on Nama Rupa, we do not see the substratum (Brahman).
- When we see the substratum, we do not see the names and forms.

Thus, by transcending **Nama Rupa**, one recognizes the underlying reality as **Brahman**.

Identity with Brahman

The one who knows the **Supreme Brahman** becomes Brahman—not by transformation, but because he was always Brahman.

Due to ignorance **(Avidya)**, there appears to be a separation between the individual self and **Brahman**. When this ignorance is removed through knowledge, that apparent gap disappears.

Freedom from Obstacles

Until one realizes **Brahman**, there may be obstacles—even subtle ones, sometimes described as arising from **Devatas** (cosmic forces).

But once **Brahman** is realized, all obstacles cease.

Blessing of the Lineage

Not only the realized person, but the entire **Guru–Shishya Parampara** (teacher-student lineage) is blessed.

It is said that in such a lineage, no one departs without attaining the knowledge of Brahman. The knowledge continues to flow, ensuring liberation for sincere seekers in that tradition.

Freedom from Dualities

The realized person transcends:

- **Shoka** (sorrow)
- **Papa** (demerit)
- **Punya** (merit)
- **Dharma and Adharma**

The mind of an ignorant person is bound by desire and ignorance. But through knowledge, one becomes free from all bondage.

Final Liberation

Such a person, while living, is liberated **(Jivanmukta)**.

After the fall of the body, he attains **Videha Mukti**, where there is no return to **Samsara**.

He remains established as pure **Brahman**, free from all limitations.

Verse 8:

Like the rivers disappearing in the sea, losing their names and forms, so does a wise man, freed from name and form, attains the Purusha, who is greater than the Great. 3.2.8

Verse 9:

He who knows the Supreme Brahman verily becomes Brahman. In his family no one is born ignorant of Brahman. He crosses grief, virtue and vice; freed from the fetters of the heart, he becomes immortal. 3.2.9

Who is Qualified to Receive this Jnana?

The **Upanishads** clearly state that this knowledge should be imparted only to those who are qualified **(Adhikari)**. The qualifications are as follows:

1. One Possessing Sadhana Chatustaya Sampatti

The seeker must be endowed with **Sadhana Chatustaya** (the fourfold qualifications).

Such a person:

- Has lived a life aligned with **Dharma**
- Has performed duties in the spirit of **Karma Yoga**
- Has gained purity of mind **(Chitta Shuddhi)**

Through **Karma Yoga**, **Raga** (attachment) and **Dvesha** (aversion) are reduced.

Although discrimination **(Viveka)** exists in everyone, it is usually covered by attachment and aversion. When these are removed, discrimination becomes clear, leading to **Mumukshutva** (a deep desire for liberation).

2. One Who Has Studied the Vedas (Shravana)

The seeker must have:

- Studied the **Vedas** through proper listening (**Shravana**)
- Approached the teachings with discipline and receptivity.

This prepares the mind to properly understand the teaching of **Brahman**.

3. Devotion and Surrender to Ishvara

The seeker should be:

- Devoted to **Ishvara**
- Surrendered in attitude (**Ishvara Arpana Buddhi**)

Such devotion removes ego and prepares the mind for knowledge.

4. Performer of Yajna and Upholder of Vedic Life

The qualified seeker:

- Performs **Yajnas** and prescribed duties
- Lives in accordance with **Vedic values**

This ensures inner refinement and discipline.

5. Faith in the Vedas (Shraddha)

The seeker must have firm **Shraddha**:

- That the **Vedas** are a valid means of knowledge (**Pramana**)
- That they reveal the nature of **Brahman**

Without this faith, the teaching cannot be assimilated.

Verse 10:

This Knowledge of Brahman should he told to those only who have performed their duties, who are versed in the Vedas and devoted to Ishvara and who, full of faith, have offered oblations in the Ekarshi Fire and performed, according to rule, the rite of carrying fire on the head. 3.2.10

Final Teaching and Conclusion

These teachings given by **Angira** are to be understood as truth **(Satya)**.

This knowledge is sacred and must not be imparted to those who are not qualified. The **Upanishad** concludes by offering salutations to all the **Rishis (sages)** and seekers who have preserved, practiced, and transmitted this knowledge through the tradition.

Through their effort, this wisdom continues to guide sincere seekers toward the realization of **Brahman**.

Verse 11:

Thus the seer Angiras declared this truth in the ancient times. This should not be given to those who have not performed the vows. Salutation to the great sages! Salutation to the great seers! 3.2.11

Thank you

I am deeply grateful to **Swami Guruparananda**, without whom this work would not have been possible. It is only because of great gurus like him that ordinary seekers like me can even aspire to such supreme knowledge. I am truly thankful for his tireless efforts in preserving and spreading this wisdom.

He explains the Upanishads and other scriptures with remarkable clarity and elegance, communicating even the most subtle ideas with exceptional simplicity. These philosophies are inherently profound and difficult to grasp, yet they appear accessible and attainable only because of teachers like him.

I consider myself fortunate to have access to his teachings and to be able to embark on this spiritual journey. As a seeker of knowledge, I aspire to learn and understand as much as I can in this lifetime.

I was truly blessed to find a guru and to have access to such profound teachings. What I have received, I now attempt to share, so that others may also benefit from this wisdom.

There is a wealth of his teachings available on the Upanishads, Vedic texts, Brahma Sutras, the Bhagavad Gita, and more—meticulously recorded and made accessible through his website and YouTube channel.

https://www.poornalayam.org/home/about-swamiji/
https://www.youtube.com/user/swamiguruparananda